Past, Place & People:

An Ethnography of Museum Consumption

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Abstract

The thesis exemplifies the potential of ethnography as an approach to the study of museum consumption and its role within contemporary education and leisure practices. It is based on the case study of *Lifetimes* - an innovative local history museum in the London borough of Croydon, and incorporates a detailed, analytical description of the perception, discourse and practice of museum consumption, from the varied viewpoints of the producers and, especially, the consumers. This broad perspective is then used to reveal, and explain, how the effects and consequences of museum visiting can differ, dramatically at times, from the intentions and expectations of staff and visitors. Special emphasis is placed on the question of physical, mental and conceptual access and comfort, as well as on the concepts of 'meaning-making', appropriation and ownership.

Positioned between 'choice' and 'chore', museum visiting is viewed as a complex, 'transitional' activity that is neither 'leisure' *per se*, nor 'labour' *per se*. The analysis then proceeds to establish that people's present perception, and consequent consumption, of museums is a product of their past experiences, and particularly their early museum encounters. The quality of these experiences, along with the quality of their social contexts, is shown to have a profound and enduring effect on museum-visiting practices in later life.

Proposing a much-expanded view of local history museums as a figurative meeting point of 'past', 'place' and 'people', the thesis explores people's experience of history, locality and community, demonstrating the interconnections between these mediums and a sense of identity and belonging. The study also draws attention to the materiality of 'past' and 'place' as an external reference point for identity, as well as to the notion of the home as a private 'museum of memories'. The thesis concludes with an overall analysis model of local history museums and their consumption.

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In memory of my beloved father

Yaacov Nahmani

1942 - 2004

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Section One

Introduction

An Ethnography
Of Museum Consumption

The Studied Phenomenon

The twentieth century has witnessed an exceptional 'boom' in museum growth, in terms of both physical expansion and ideological progression, affecting the museum's diverse character, roles, image and popularity. Museums have become fundamental sites of education, cultivation and entertainment, emerging, in Britain alone, at a rate of one every fortnight. According to the 'Museum Association' (2003) [1] there are currently between 2,500 and 3,000 registered museums in the UK, with an estimated average of, at least, 80 million visitors per annum. The notable scale and prevalence of this phenomenon clearly raises the issue of contemporary museum consumption, illustrating its cultural significance. And yet this milieu has remained largely unacknowledged in anthropological debate, which often centres its museum deliberation on the representation of 'other' non-western cultures (cf. O'Hanlon, 1993; Marcus & Myers, 1995; Clifford, 1988, 1999), as well as on issues of contemporary cultural production (see Handler & Gable, 1997; Katriel, 1997; Macdonald, 1998; and Bouquet, 2001). While Bagnall's work on heritage-sites (1996) and Macdonald's wide-ranging studies of the Science Museum in London (1992, 1993, 2002a) provide innovative advances in museum debate, there has been little ethnographic continuation. In particular, there has never been a comprehensive, ethnographic study of local history museums and their consumption - 'from the consumers' point of view', which is the essence of this thesis. Having said that, an in-depth, ethnographic critique of museum consumption cannot disregard the process, practice and politics of museum production. Acknowledging these issues, the study explores the 'museum experience' from the varied perspectives of both its producers and, especially, its consumers.

Most of the literature addressing the public consumption of museums in general, and local history museums in particular, draws upon market-research style visitor studies, which are based primarily on statistical data, obtained from mail, telephone, or on-site surveys, as well as on the, sometimes biased, outcome of focus group discussions, where unnatural social settings and possible group pressure may affect voiced opinions. While the more consistent of these visitor studies can provide a clear, overall review, the majority of them often lack the ability to produce either an in-depth analysis or a

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[1] *Source: Museum Association Website - www.museumassociation.org - Last Date of Access - December 30th 2003.*

more profound understanding of the studied phenomenon, within its cultural context. Merriman's comprehensive work on museum and heritage visiting (1989a, 1989b, 1991, 2000) is a notable exception. Its extensive data and detailed critique provide a valuable basis for further investigation. However, while Merriman's quantitative research was based entirely on an extensive postal survey, the study presented in this thesis advocates a more contextual, holistic approach, and is therefore primarily qualitative in nature. Having said that, the core strategy of participant observation was complemented throughout the fieldwork period with a variety of qualitative and quantitative, interdisciplinary methods, which are described in detail in the fieldwork review.

Applying an ethnographic approach, together with an eclectic array of methods, enabled a much broader exploration of contemporary museum culture, combining several related themes. Choosing *Lifetimes*, Croydon's innovative local history museum, as a fieldwork focus provided a fascinating case study, as well as a vital 'point of entry' to the field.

The underlining premise of this thesis is that the consumption of museums in general, and local history museums in particular, is far more complex than a simple leisure choice. It is an intricate, multifaceted act that, in the case of local history and heritage museums, is strongly linked to notions of identity and belonging, thereby revealing important aspects of contemporary British culture. Attaining a deeper understanding of this phenomenon demands a comprehensive analysis of its various components, which became the guiding principles in constructing the thesis' sections and outline.

Thesis Layout

The thesis incorporates five interrelated sections: an extensive, overall *Introduction*; *The Lifetimes Experience*; *Museum Consumption*; *Past, Place & People*; and the final *Summary & Conclusion* - with each section exploring a different, distinct aspect of the studied phenomenon.

Section One: Introduction is designed to 'set the scene' and provide a general theoretical, ethnographical and methodological framework. The first sub-section highlights the cultural significance and prevalence of the studied phenomenon and the importance of exploring it further within the framework of an ethnographic approach. This is then followed by the principal, underlining premise of the thesis, and its consequential section layout, along with an outline of each of the five sections.

The second sub-section centres upon the theoretical framework of the presented study. Incorporating a historical examination of 'museum evolution' that highlights the relationship between museums and their public throughout the ages, the review situates the studied phenomenon within its historical, political and cultural contexts.

The third sub-section presents the ethnographic framework of the study, establishing the unique geographic, demographic and historic attributes of the field site, with its diversity of histories, landscapes and communities. The review then focuses upon the core locale of fieldwork - the *Lifetimes* museum, highlighting the political, economical and cultural conditions that led to its creation. Special emphasis is placed upon the policies and philosophies that influenced *Lifetimes*' local history display.

The forth sub-section establishes the methodological framework of the presented study, providing a detailed account of the various methods employed during research, as well as the fieldwork experiences that led to the writing of the thesis.

Section Two: The Lifetimes Experience introduces people's perceptions and practices, which form the museum's 'cultures of consumption'. The analysis presented in the two core-modules - *Tracking The Viewers* and *Voicing The Viewers* integrates and correlates the principal findings that emerge from the various, qualitative and quantitative, studies conducted at *Lifetimes*. The two core-modules incorporate a variety of themes, from visitors' physical and verbal reactions, and interactions, during the visit (including their preferences and precise movement patterns around the museum space) to their perception and evaluation of the museum: immediately following the visit, and over an extended period of contact. A further comparison is then made between the initial reactions to *Lifetimes*, and the lasting impressions and perceptions of the museum, from the varied perspectives of both the museum's staff and a range of its diverse visitors.

Reviewing and comparing the various findings generates a detailed portrayal of the *Lifetimes* experience, which enables an introductory examination of the museum and its viewers. However, an ethnographic study calls for a more reflective, profound analysis. Achieving this objective demands a wider review of both the studied phenomenon and its cultural context, beyond the particular aspects of the core case study of *Lifetimes*, which is the essence of the thesis' subsequent sections.

Section Three: Museum Consumption incorporates a multifaceted analysis of contemporary museum culture, examining the role museums play within current leisure and education practices.

The first core-module of this section - *Transitional Activities* - explores people's preferred leisure activities (as individuals, or as family members), while highlighting the 'transitional' characteristics that distinguish museum visiting from other 'leisure choices'. The critique addresses the structural and cultural *deterrents* to museum visiting, as well as the structural and cultural *incentives* to museum visiting, which influence people's perception and consequent practice of museum consumption.

The second core-module of this section - *Perception & Practice* - examines the premise that museum consumption is a direct outcome of museum perception, through a variety of case studies. The review emphasises the need for expanding the traditional, rudimentary dyad of 'visitors' and 'non-visitors' to include a new, distinctive category, defined as 'gallery goers'. The analysis continues with a comparison between shopping and museum visiting, highlighting the significance of museum-shops and souvenirs to museum experiences. The discussion then proceeds to consider the value and meaning of objects in general and collections in particular, leading to an in-depth exploration of collectors' perception, and consequent practice of museum consumption. The critique identifies three distinctive collector categories: 'object' collectors; 'experience' - or - 'memory' collectors; and 'knowledge' collectors. Highlighting the diversity of their interests, the review demonstrates how different types of collectors have distinctly different attitudes towards museums.

The third, and final core-module of this section - *Enduring Experiences* - considers the hypothesis that people's present perception and consequent consumption of museums is a product of their past encounters with museums, and particularly their early experiences of museum visiting, either with a family member, or with the school. Special emphasis is then placed upon people's recollection of their first museum visit, exploring its enduring affect on their present-day perceptions. The module concludes with an ethnographic exploration of the school-visit experience, which illustrates the core premise that the *quality* of early museum experiences, along with the *quality* of their social contexts, has a profound and enduring effect on the perception and consequent consumption of museums in later life, be it as a gratifying 'leisure choice', an edifying 'cultural chore', or any other, 'transitional' category in between.

Section Four: Past, Place & People shifts the focus of discussion back to local history and heritage displays. Proposing a much-expanded view of local history museums as a figurative meeting point of 'past', 'place' and 'people', the principal modules of this section - *Yearning For Yesterday*; *A Tale of Two Cities*; and *Home Sweet Home* - come together to explore local people's perception, discourse, practice and overall experience of history, locality and community, demonstrating the interconnections between these mediums and a sense of identity and belonging.

The first core-module - *Yearning For Yesterday* - examines people's perception and definition of 'history', 'heritage' and 'the past', and the ways in which they choose to access, explore, absorb and appropriate these mediums. The critique also addresses the notions of longing and nostalgia, as well as the prevalent drive to highlight particular historical events, and life events, over others.

The second core-module - *A Tale of Two Cities* - explores people's perception and practice of 'place', studying their means of creating and maintaining a sense of locality, community and belonging. The review centres upon a detailed examination of Croydon's distinctive complexities of 'place' and 'space', and its overall 'identity crisis'. The discussion highlights the local manifestations of the 'Croydon experience' from its residents' diverse points of view.

The third, and final core-module of this section - *Home Sweet Home* - draws attention to the materiality of 'past' and 'place' - as an external reference point for identity, as well as to the notion of the home as the most local, and most personal of history museums - as a private 'museum of memories'. The review centres upon an in-depth case study, establishing the corresponding roles of material culture and oral narratives in personal reminiscences, thereby demonstrating their significance in the practice of history and remembrance, within a specific, domestic context.

Section Five: Summary & Conclusion - this final section is designed to bring together the various themes of the thesis, summarising the core findings and key contributions, along with the principal conclusions and overall implications of this study. The section concludes with two analysis models - illustrating the new perception of local history museums and their consumption presented in this study, and demonstrating how the correlation between an individual's personal identity and the museum's presentation can indicate the extent of their interest in the museum, and its consequent consumption.

Theoretical Framework
And Historical Review

Introduction

"Museums not only exist within a particular time and space, they also help articulate particular temporal and special orders. It is in this respect that we can see them not just existing within a context, but also as themselves creating cultural contexts"

(Macdonald & Fyfe, 1996: 8)

Museum history is characterised by dramatic transformations, simultaneously reflecting and effecting the perception, interpretation and presentation of knowledge and culture. Frequently linked with power and privilege, museums have been deploying authority and constituting value for centuries. Museums and their public must therefore be examined within a specific context of time and place, addressing the social, economical and political conditions of their era.

Examining the historical shaping of contemporary culture, Foucault's studies highlight the dominant forces of power and knowledge, which he regards as firmly interconnected (Sheridan, 1980: 82; Wuthnow, 1984: 133). However, Foucault's concept of power (1970, 1972) stresses its ambivalent nature. Power, he claims, is at once both negative, because of its relation to domination and repression, and positive, because of its relation to driving forces that induce pleasure, form knowledge and produce discourse. Emphasising the positive aspects of power, he argues, that all social relations depend on power, which works 'through them, in them and on them' (Tilley, 1991: 285; Rabinow, 1986: 60-61).

However, Foucault's portrayal of power in contemporary society (1979) is extremely nihilistic. Defined as a 'new form of domination and repression', and linked to the emerging modes of surveillance technology, power has become, according to Foucault, an all-embracing, profound force of discipline, which regulates the mind, the very self, thereby marking a move "from punishment of the body to that of the soul" (Wuthnow, 1984: 163). Self-control, argues Foucault, has become the fundamental nature of what he terms 'modern disciplinary society', within which people become 'marching soldiers'.

Foucault's doctrine of discipline, extreme as it may be, provides a useful tool for analysing social rules, norms and codes of conduct, as well as both formal and informal sanctions. In this sense, Foucault's notions of power and discipline provide a means of analysing influential social institutions, like museums, within certain temporal and spatial contexts, and their specific frames of thought and action.

This emphasis upon context is akin to the *Relativist* school of thought, which celebrates the differences that make cultures unique and distinct. This egalitarian, philosophical approach stresses pluralism, tolerance, and multiple perspectives. Ardently advocating contextual analysis, it opposes the concepts of 'objective' or 'absolute truth', as well as a 'universal logic', thereby rejecting the *Rationalist* approach, which validates but one, Western way of 'gazing' upon, and understanding the world.

According to Hollis & Lukes (1982), *Relativism* is derived from a strong sense of 'anthropological duty' to understand, and respect, the worlds of other cultures, from within. "This implied judging other cultures only by their, not our standards, especially in the face of the prevailing ethnocentric assumptions of nineteenth century Anthropology" (1982: 2). This 'Romantic Notion' as Hollis & Lukes refer to it, has been emphasised by Franz Boas and his followers, stressing a doctrine in which "each culture can be understood only as an historical growth, determined by the social and geographical environment in which each people is placed..." (Boas, 1955: 4). Mary Douglas (1975) has correspondingly argued for a theory of knowledge in which "the mind is admitted to be actively creating its universe" (1975: XVIII). Emphasising the notion of 'subjective truth', she claims that all conceptualised information is cultural. Similarly, Geertz's studies (1973, 1983) highlight the importance of - 'local knowledge', maintaining that anthropological understanding can only emanate from an interpretative, contextual analysis, which emphasises the 'native's point of view' (Malinowski, 1922, in: Schwartzman, 1993).

While Foucault is often defined as a *Post-Structuralist*, his theories, and in particular his concepts of power and knowledge play a vital role within the *Relativist* framework. Influenced by Nietzsche, as well as Marx's *Relativistic* concept of 'false consciousness', Foucault's doctrine of knowledge derives from the assumption that reality is socially constructed. "It was a guiding idea of Marx that our knowledge of the world is limited by the historical epoch within which we live... *'Man's ideas, views and conceptions,*

in a word, Man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations, and in his social life' (Marx & Engels)..." (Rowlands, 1984: 108). Foucault consequently maintains that any intellectual activity, at any given period of time is dominated by specific cultural 'codes of knowledge', which depend on available information, beliefs, technologies and social relations. Foucault then contends that cultural factors limit our way of thinking, as we can only function, intellectually and imaginatively, within the limitations of our language, concepts and beliefs, or in other words, within the cultural codes of 'knowing' and 'thinking' that dominate our specific temporal and spatial context. This 'cultural code' of knowledge and thought is classified by Foucault as an *episteme* - a historical and social 'a priori' - with each epistemological era being dominated by a different, distinctive episteme that sets an indisputable framework of thinking, writing, learning and discovering. It is impossible, according to Foucault, to intellectually 'go beyond' the specific epistemic framework of an era. Thus, time and space predetermine people's scope of thought and action (Wuthnow, 1984: 154-159; Tilley, 1991: 290-292).

Centring her analysis on Foucault's concepts of 'epistemological knowledge' (1970) and 'effective history' (1972), Hooper-Greenhill's studies (1989, 1992) advocate a radically *Relativistic* reading of museum history, as a reflection of shifts in epistemological knowledge. Stressing change and rupture, she highlights difference and discontinuity over developmental flows and connections. Rejecting preceding museum history texts, Hooper-Greenhill's concluding conjecture is that museums are constantly changing and are therefore all fundamentally different, with nothing in common.

While this thesis endorses an overall *Relativist* approach, and strongly advocates the case for contextual analysis, the following historical review still differs considerably from Hooper-Greenhill's radical *Relativism*, insofar as it accentuates an underlying consistency in museum 'evolution' - an analogous, woven thread that binds all museums, and cannot be ignored. For, whatever their epistemological framework, guiding agenda, or contemporary mode of display, museums have always had, and will probably always have, an abiding association with knowledge, privilege and empowerment.

Knowledge, Privilege & Empowerment

From Museia To Museum

"Accumulation of material things, both natural and artificial, have [sic] always been one of the ways... to know the world... museums have been constituted according to the prevailing epistemological context, and have, therefore, enabled different possibilities of knowing according to the rules and structures in place at the time"

(Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 191)

Vast collections of objects, valued for their aesthetic, historic, or religious significance (including manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, relics, jewellery, tapestries and fabrics, along with other luxury goods and art) were prevalent among the rulers and affluent elite of many early civilisations, such as China, India, Egypt, Sumeria, Assyria, Persia and Babylonia. Similar collections, in both volume and substance, were amassed in the temples, managed by the priests 'for the Gods' (Lewis, 1992a: 5-6; Belk, 1995: 2-4; Alexander, 1996: 6-7).

Indeed, one of the earliest forms of 'museum' was a place of worship - the *Museia*. This ancient Greek temple was a place of contemplation, meditation and offerings to the Muses, the nine daughters of Zeus, Goddesses of remembrance and inspiration. These 'divine guardians of the past', as portrayed by Homer in *'The Odyssey'* and *'The Iliad'*, preserved and revived history, poetry, music, dance, drama, literature and art, inspiring mankind with their multi-vocal songs, thereby serving as a medium between 'Man and the Gods' (Belk, 1995: 5; Alexander, 1996: 8). During the fourth century BC the concept of *Museia* was used by Aristotle and Plato to describe the *Academia* - a philosophical institution for discourse and democratic debate (Butler, 1996: 1-2). The members of the *Academia* were organised as a *thiasos*, a sacred band of scholars, dedicated to the service of the Muses (Ripley, 1978: 24).

However, the 'classic origin' of museums is often ascribed to the *Ptolemaic Mouseion* at Alexandria, which was "first and foremost, a study collection with library attached, a repository of knowledge, a place of scholars and philosophers, and historians" (Vergo, 1989: 1). The *Mouseion* also served as a mausoleum for Alexander the Great, which may well have influenced later images of the museum as a temple for the dead.

Following the Greek unification by Alexander the Great, and subsequent introductions of foreign objects and influences (especially imported luxury goods from the East) widespread collecting, beyond a religious or academic context, became popular. Similarly, in Rome, new wealth (an outcome of conquest and plunder) and sumptuary laws, served as precursors to the rise of public collecting (Belk, 1995: 22-24).

In Medieval times, European collections took the form of royal and religious treasures, closely correlating with displays of wealth, power and hegemony. Henry II of England (1207-1272) had a collection of paintings, plates and relics. Henry VIII (1491-1547) was known as an art patron (especially of poetry and music). However, it was not until the reign of Charles I (1600-1649) that the first notable royal collection was unveiled in England (Lewis, 1992b: 22).

The waning of the Middle Ages marks the transition to private collecting in Europe. Important collectors of this era included the Medici family and Duke Jean De Berry, the son of King Jean Le Bon of France. De Berry is a significant figure in the history of collections, seeing that he was among the first to collect the types of objects that, two centuries later, became common in the 'Curiosity Cabinets'. His collection marks the transition from a medieval treasury to objects collected solely for their own sake, disregarding their potential role as a store of value (ibid.: 28). The Medici of Florence were the clear leaders among Italian art patrons and collectors. By the time Lorenzo the Magnificent died (1492) the Medici collection had grown considerably, consisting of paintings, sculptures, jewels, gems, books and oddities, such as a unicorn's horn, which was considered more significant than the art (Bazin, 1967: 18-20).

During the Renaissance, discoveries of foreign lands and the abundance of knowledge and goods they provided, led to a dramatic increase in both wealth and leisure time. The subsequent rise of capitalism, together with the emergence of new inventions, such as the clock and the printing press, served to produce an era of substantial economic growth and rising consumer culture (Belk, 1995: 29-30). This provided the setting for the development of the sixteenth century *Proto-Museum*, which reflected the re-emerged emphasis on knowledge, intellect, and the concept of the scholar. A new type of collector, consisting of professionals such as doctors, lawyers and scholars began to emerge, leading to a swell of collecting activity that prevailed in Europe

throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This era was defined by Pomian (1990) as - 'The Age of Collecting and Curiosity'.

Knowledge itself became a commodity, something that could be purchased on the market, rather than being circulated orally. Travel accounts of discoveries in the Americas, China, India, Africa and the Middle East, were read by many Europeans. There was a desire to 'know the world' with an emphasis on the exotic. European culture in this period is marked by a keen fascination with marvels - "things or events that were unusual, exotic, extraordinary, or rare. The word marvel was widely applied to anything that lay outside the ordinary... the exotic, the bizarre, the unusually large, or unusually small, the surprising and unexpected" (Kenseth, 1991: 25). The marvel and excitement stimulated by these 'wonderful new things' led to their avid collection and display in thousands of - 'Closets of Rarities' or 'Cabinets of Curiosity' - which were commonly referred to as 'Wunderkammern'. These eclectic collections played an important role in the contemporary endeavours to comprehend and encapsulate the 'universal nature', establishing the 'position of mankind in the grand scheme of things'.

Featuring an all-encompassing, encyclopaedic display, a 'summary of the universe', the 'Wunderkammern' became an essential tool for Renaissance learning and research. Private collections were amassed during this period with the aim of transmitting information and knowledge to their privileged viewers. This was achieved by a systematic arrangement and display of the collected objects (Schulz, 1994: 175-178; Pomian, 1990: 52-53; Impey & McGregor, 1985: 2-4). Contemporary collections included "art, as well as artefacts, antiquities, scientific instruments, minerals, fossils, human and animal remains. Objects of every conceivable kind... served not merely the baser function of the display of wealth, or power, or privilege, but also as places of study" (Vergo, 1989: 2-3).

Exceptional private collections were also formed in England during this period. Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel (1586-1646) exhibited his collection of Greek antiquities, which included classical marble statues, gems, drawings and manuscripts, at Arundel House, in London's Strand, making them available to renowned scholars.

John Tradescant (1577-1638) in contrast, came from a far more modest background. He worked as a gardener on four distinguished country estates, including that of king Charles I, who was an avid collector. He consequently visited numerous places in Europe and Africa, and had a number of other contacts overseas. In 1625 he retired and leased a house in Lambeth, London, where he displayed his eclectic collections. These included a wide variety of foreign plants, stuffed birds and animals, as well as artefacts from different parts of the world. The house opened to the public, and became a popular London attraction, known as *Tradescant's Ark*, or simply *The Ark*. After Tradescant's death in 1656, his son published a catalogue of the collection under the title - *'Museum Tradescantianum'* marking the first recorded use of the term 'museum' in England. John Tradescant junior (1608-1662) continued to maintain and supplement his father's collections, which eventually became the major founding collection for the Ashmolean Museum, at Oxford (Lewis, 1992b: 23).

By the end of the seventeenth century, 'Cabinets of Curiosities' lost much of their popularity, although they continued to exist far into the eighteenth century (Kenseth, 1991: 98). An interest in curiosities was now viewed as a sign of ignorance, appropriate only for "women, the very young, the very old, primitive people and the uneducated masses, a motley group, collectively designated as 'the vulgar'" (Mauries, 2002: 193).

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of great growth in English collecting, which was shared by the aristocratic, professional and merchant classes alike. A substantial part of earlier British collecting was linked to the ideal of the 'English Gentleman's Country House'. Deriving status from such a house, and the collected family treasures it held, was replaced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a new system of status, in which novelty and fashion supplanted the conservative principals. Kenseth (1991) regards this new longing for novelty, as a clear indication that the fascination with the 'curious marvel' did not die with the 'Wunderkammern'. Rather, it was the organising principles of collecting that changed.

As illustrated by Stewart (1994), seventeenth and eighteenth century novelty was based on dramatic transitions from the normal scale to the miniature, or the gigantic; from the ordinary to the 'freak of nature'. These principles are also reflected in the literature of that period (e.g. Swift's *'Gulliver's Travels'*), as well as in the growing

fascination with circuses, zoos, game trophy-hunting, animal entertainment (such as bear-baiting, dog-fights, and so forth), 'freak shows', public tours of mental hospitals, and the early Commercial Museums. The *Western Museum of Cincinnati*, which became one of the best-known entertainment sites in North America, is a typical example of the latter. "Besides stuffed animals, rocks, insects and Indian artefacts, the museum had a 'mermaid' made from the top half of a monkey stitched to the bottom half of a fish, the tattooed head of a Maori chief and most popular of all, an electrified depiction of Dante's hell" (Belk, 1995: 105). Eventually, the *Western Museum*, *P. T. Barnum's Museum* and numerous others of their kind, were supplanted by non-profit Public Museums, which, as with the private collections of that era, became more specialised.

The first Public Museum in Britain, the former *Tradescant's Ark*, which was later transformed into the *Ashmolean Museum* in Oxford (founded 1683), demonstrates the development process, characteristic of many public museums in Europe and America. Like many others, this expansive Cabinet of Curiosity grew from a private collection, accessible only to specific, selected viewers, to a commercial venture, open to the public on payment of a fee, finally becoming a Public Museum, after the collection had been inherited by Elias Ashmole and then donated (1683) to the Oxford University

Correspondingly, the *British Museum* in London was founded in 1753, from the natural history collection of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), which he amassed in Jamaica while serving as the Governor's personal physician (Lewis, 1992b: 23-25; Alexander, 1983: 23-27). The *Uffizi Gallery* in Florence (founded 1739) and the - *'Muse' Napoleon'*, which became the *Louvre'* in Paris (founded 1793) are further examples of the eighteenth century rise in this 'transformation' phenomenon - where previously private collections turned into publicly funded, and publicly accessible, museums. An additional, regional example is the London based *Leverian Museum*. Featuring Sir Ashton Lever's collection of naturalia, this Leicester Square museum opened to the public (on a commercial basis) in 1775. The impressive collection contained "thousands of objects - fossils, shells, birds, insects, reptiles, fishes, monkeys, and (the prize exhibits) an elephant and a zebra" (Mauries, 2002: 202).

Gradually the all-encompassing, encyclopaedic 'Curiosity Cabinet' and the eclectic novelties of the early Commercial Museums gave way to the increasingly specialised Public Museums of art and design, natural history, science, ethnography and history. These developments mark the emergence of the nineteenth century's Grand Museum. The *National Gallery* in London (1824); The *Smithsonian* in Washington DC (1835); The *South Kensington Museum* (1852), which later became the *Victoria & Albert Museum* and the *Science Museum*; The *Hermitage Museum* in St. Petersburg (1852); The *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (1870); The *Metropolitan Museum of Art* in New-York (1872); were all founded in this era, which was defined by Bazin (1967) as - 'The Museum Age'.

Contrary to the earlier Public Museum, which was created as an entertaining diversion, the Grand Museum was premised on a strong belief in the benefits of education and cultivation. This was an age of substantial social reform, with Governments attempting to respond to the effects of the industrial revolution. "There was a concern that those in manufacturing industry, including the working classes, should have opportunities to extend their knowledge, particularly in the arts and principles of design" (Lewis, 1992b: 27). This was also a time of growth for the municipal museum movement in Britain, which led to the emergence of the first local museums in the UK. Following the 1845 legislation for municipal authorities to provide museums, towns began (albeit slowly) to open local museums, often taking over the collections of local societies. Sunderland (1846), Canterbury (1847), Warrington (1848), Dover, Leicester, and Salford (1849) were the first six examples of the new Municipal Museum. (ibid.). Archaeological Societies began to be formed with the purpose of forming a museum. The Local Museums in St. Albans (1845), Lewes (1846) and Colchester (1846) appear to be the earliest examples of this. In Devizes, Wiltshire, the local society included both natural history and archaeological interests in its museum display, which was founded on the archaeological collections of Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838) and William Cunnington (1754-1810). The *Gloucester Museum* (1859) presented the local historical and scientific association's collections, while the museums at Berwick-on-Tweed (1857) and Salisbury (1860) were founded on private collections (ibid., 28). There was a further, substantial, growth in the number of Municipal Museums in the period between 1870-1910. While some municipal museums were founded to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee, most of them were created as the result of a donated collection. The site of the city museum at St. Albans was given by Earl Spencer.

Frederick J. Horniman donated a new building and gardens, as well as a substantial founding collection, which included his vast music, ethnography and natural history compilations, to the London County Council (ibid.: 28-32).

As an educational agency, nineteenth century museums could not merely display objects, they had to invest them with meaning through interpretation (Spiess, 1990, in: Belk, 1995: 107). This was achieved by classification and systematic categorisation. "Pitt-Rivers' topological displays were mid nineteenth century culmination's of this taxonomic vision" (Clifford, 1988: 229). The museum's interpretation and presentation served its socialisational and political aims. This was especially prominent towards the end of the nineteenth-century, under the dominant influence of evolution theories.

Implicit in the 'educational mission' of the museum is the promise that 'museums are for everyone'. However, many of the Grand Museums gradually 'sanctified' and 'purified' their collections, as well as their directors and audiences. By removing all that was not deemed 'high culture', along with all who were not deemed 'high society', the public museum was transformed into an 'elite showcase' of high culture, an institute of exclusion, where entry was privilege (Belk, 1995: 107; Hudson, 1975: 8). The British Museum provides an intriguing example, with its strict rules, governing 'free' public access. To gain admission it was necessary to apply for a ticket, well in advance, stating - 'names, conditions, and places of abode'. Once admission was approved by the principal librarian, it was necessary to return and collect the ticket, and then come again to visit the collection on the day and time authorised. Only ten tickets were issued for each visiting hour, and the authorised visitors were conducted round the museum in parties of five (Lewis, 1992b: 25; and Alexander, 1983: 36).

Museums became part of the contemporary 'cultural capital', exclusively facilitating an understanding and appreciation of 'high culture' among the upper social classes (Bourdieu, 1984, in: Belk, 1995: 107-108). "What sumptuary laws failed to protect, and what democratised consumption in an affluent consumer society took away, was regained by the elite, at least for a time, in the sacred temple of the museum. The grand and imposing architecture of museum buildings, their glass-case hands-off distance displays, and their solemn tomb-like demeanour, were intentionally off-putting for members of lower social classes" (Belk, 1995: 108).

Museums transformed into 'Authenticity Temples', highlighting the sacredness of the original. Orvell (1989) defines this trend as a cultural-shift from valorising the arts of imitation and illusion, to an emphasis upon 'the real thing', in which the notion of 'authenticity' becomes of primary value. Belk (1995) further maintains that the classification of objects (as observed by Durkheim and Mauss) often reflects the classification of society. Correspondingly, he claims, museums that began with eclectic displays of mixed objects, attracting mixed social class audiences, came to segregate both (ibid.: 109). "To visit institutes like the Victoria and Albert is, accordingly, to experience and witness the power of the ruling culture, a power which manifests itself precisely through its ability to exclude everything which, through its exclusion, is defined as other and subordinate" (Bennett, 1995: 118).

Bennett (1995) applies Foucault's concepts of knowledge, power and discipline to his analysis of nineteenth century museums, regarding them as *Exhibitionary Institutions*, within which power relations were produced and proclaimed. The new public museum was strongly influenced by the Great International Exposition, which took place at the Crystal Palace, in London, in 1851. The Great Exhibition, as it was known, introduced - "an ensemble of disciplines and techniques of display... Simultaneously ordering objects for public inspection and ordering the public that inspected" (Bennett, 1995: 61). These 'exhibitionary' principals came to play a vital role as an educative and civilising agency.

Museums were employed as a means of educating and refining the working classes, as well as conveying an ideological message of hegemony and domination. "Museums were typically located at the centre of cities where they stood as embodiments, both material and symbolic, of a power to show and tell" (ibid.: 87). Providing the context for a permanent display of power and knowledge, the Grand Museums served as an instrument of distinction and differentiation for bourgeois society. "In the nineteenth century museum, the cultures of subordinate classes were, and largely still are, a simple absence, excluded not only as a matter of definition (the working classes were not regarded as having a culture worthy of preservation), but also as a matter of deliberate policy of 'improving' the people by exposing them to beneficial influence of middle class culture" (ibid.: 118). Museums were regarded as a crucial instrument for reforming manners and behaviour. This was achieved by enforcing a set of behaviour-governing rules, such as controlling movement, forbidding contact, as well as eating or drinking, maintaining silence and even stating a dress code.

Furthermore, museums, like other *Exhibitionary Institutions*, were constituted as emulation spaces. The working classes were offered an opportunity to adopt a new, refined form of behaviour by way of imitation. Within this context improved modes of conduct could be internalised, thus becoming 'self-acting imperatives' (ibid.: 100).

The employment of a new mode of 'exhibitionary' architecture, further contributed to the regulation of public behaviour. Enthusiastically influenced by the Great Exhibition, museums implemented three general exhibitionary principals: First, the use of cast-iron and sheet-glass, which enabled the enclosure and illumination of specific spaces; Second, the re-arrangement of exhibits on the sides and centre of the display area, thus controlling the public's movement into an orderly flow; And third, the construction of elevated vantage-points "from which the layout of the whole, and the activities of other visitors could be observed... To see and be seen, to survey yet always be under surveillance, thus allowing the public to double as both the subject and object of a controlling look" (ibid.: 69, 100-101).

These notions confirm to Erving Goffman's theories of public order and interaction. "Our familiar and commonplace experiences of the behaviour of people in public, or in the company of others, are characterised for the most part by orderliness... maintained by the observance of rules governing behaviour in public" (Goffman, 1972, in: Burns, 1992: 36). According to Goffman, public order is a complex set of rules, norms and codes of conduct, varying from one public interaction to another. These are acquired through education and socialisation, by means of observation and imitation, as well as sanctification and fortification, all of which generate internalisation. An awareness of these rules, combined with an awareness of being observed by others, serves as a means of behaviour management. "In company, an individual is always at least half-aware that some aspects of his appearance and actions are available for anyone else present to read and interpret... [therefore they are] modified so that they are in conformity with the impression the individual wants to convey" (Goffman, 1963: 35). The setting itself, as illustrated by Goffman (1975) becomes a 'behaviour cue', framing the activity within a specific social context, thereby defining the culturally appropriate mode of behaviour. The nineteenth century museum became a fundamental 'behaviour cue' and an instrument of discipline. Its architecture and interior design instituted a new set of relations between space and vision, transforming the crowds into a constantly surveyed, self-watching, self-regulating, orderly public (Hooper-Greenhill, 1989: 63).

According to Foucault (1979) generating such an influence over people's minds, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, that they no longer need to be controlled and sanctioned 'from without', as they exercise a self-control, 'from within', is the ultimate form of discipline, domination and control (Tilley, 1991: 309; Wuthnow, 1984: 163).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a new kind of specialised museum had emerged - the Open Air, or Folklife Museum - which played a vital role in the later development of local history and heritage museums in Europe and North America. *Skansen* - the original, and perhaps most influential Open Air museum was founded in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1891. *Skansen* was created by Artur Hazelius (1833-1901) with the lofty aspiration of educating the Swedish public about their local, national and regional history, and fading folklife traditions. Hazelius's principal aim was to create a comprehensive Nordic Cultural Centre. Consequently, this vast Open Air museum, with 150 buildings on 75 acres, incorporated substantial material culture collections, with sections devoted to different Scandinavian regions - Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Lapland, Finland, Denmark; addressing different themes, such as: Swedish and Danish kings; the upper classes; peasant life; guilds; crafts; and so on. The collections were displayed within contextual period settings, such as replica farms, workshops, shops, homes, churches, and the like, so to represent their original cultural environment. Costumed wax figures were then arranged in each of the settings for added realism. 'Live folklife exhibits' were also integrated, so that singers and dancers (in traditional costumes), as well as craftsmen, farmers, and even Lapps herding their reindeer, could interact with the visiting public (Alexander, 1983: 244 -254; Anderson, 1984: 17-23; Davis, 1999: 47-48). Thus, what began as a private collection of Swedish ethnology became the prototype of Living History Museums, influencing later developments of living history and heritage displays throughout Europe, Britain and North America, including instantly recognisable examples such as Henry Ford's *Greenfield Village* (opened 1929); and John D. Rockefeller's *Colonial Williamsburg* (opened 1932).

Skansen not only marks the impending rise of twentieth century egalitarian, democratic, institutional collecting, but also serves as an important precursor to the 'New Museology' movement and its powerful influence on contemporary museum philosophy and practice.

Of The People, By The People, For The People [2]

The New Museology

"The biggest challenge facing museums at the present time is the re-conceptualisation of the museum/audience relationship. After almost a century of rather remote relationships between museums and the public, museums today are seeking ways to embrace their visitors more closely..."

(Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 1)

The re-emergence of egalitarian, commercialised collecting, during the second half of the twentieth century, has led to an exceptional 'boom' in museum growth, in terms of both physical expansion and ideological progression, influencing the museum's diverse character, roles, image and popularity. The period between the early Sixties and late Eighties has been particularly significant. The number of new museums increased rapidly during this time, reaching an amazing peak in the late Eighties, when, in the USA, a new museum opened every 1.5 days. New kinds of museums, as well as new kinds of museum philosophy, began to emerge, and the response to the changing social and cultural conditions among existing museums was also gathering pace (Lewis, 1992b: 38; and Belk, 1995: 110).

World War II gave rise to a new nostalgia for the 'fast-disappearing world of yesteryear'. This prompted the conversion of traditional history museums into 'heritage mausoleums' - secular shrines of nostalgia, expressing the contemporary urge to preserve the 'lost legacy of the past' and find comfort in its nostalgic images. "It is in times of danger, either from without, or from within, that we become deeply conscious of our heritage... a nostalgia for what we think of as a happier world, which we have lost. Heritage represents some form of security, a point of reference, a refuge perhaps... stable and unchanged" (Hewison, 1987: 46-47).

The re-emergence of earlier types of heritage museums, such as the Open Air museum, alongside the development of new heritage attractions like the heritage ride, highlights the democratisation of history and heritage museums, which became progressively more

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[2] *A variation on a theme from Abraham Lincoln's* ***"Gettysburg Address"*** *(1865).*

fashionable and more accessible, both physically and mentally. "The 'open-air' museum works on the ground of popular memory, and re-styles it, in evoking past ways of life of which the visitor is likely to have had either direct or, through parents and grandparents, indirect knowledge and experience. The overwhelming effect is one of an easy-going at homeness and familiarity" (Bennett, 1995: 118). History museums and heritage presentations began to centre their display on familiar scenes of everyday life, including the Victorian and Edwardian eras, as well as the 1920s and 1930s. Museums, claimed the critics, have turned into - 'Theatres for the re-enactment of yesterday' - expressing the new nostalgia for a near past.

This new 'Heritage Phenomenon' had accelerated at such a rate that it was soon referred to as the 'Heritage Boom', which then transformed into the 'Heritage Industry' (Hewison, 1987) and, more recently, the 'Heritage Cult' (Lowenthal, 1998). By 1990 there were over forty History & Heritage centres in Britain, including: *Blists Hill* at Ironbridge Gorge; *Wigan Pier* near Wigan; the Beamish *North of England Open Air Museum* near Newcastle; *Black Country World* near Dudley; and the *Jorvik Viking Centre* in York. Nearly five hundred museums possessed industrial displays, and over eight hundred museums presented collections relating to rural history (Urry, 1990: 104-106; Lewis, 1992b: 38-39; and Macdonald, 1998: 14-15). The director of the Science Museum's response to this growth was - "You can't project that sort of rate of growth much further before the whole country becomes one big open air museum, and you just join it as you get off at Heathrow" (Hewison, 1987: 24). Heritage presentations began to play a more dominant role within the contemporary cultures of leisure and tourism, as well as becoming a common feature in the, increasingly critical, academic debate.

The principal critique of heritage displays, as presented in the works of Horne (1984), Wright (1985), Hewison (1987), Lumley (1988), Lowenthal (1985, 1998), Uzzell (1989a and 1989b), and many others of their contemporaries, emphasises what they perceive as a crucial lack of authenticity, which generates a rose-tinted picture of an imagined past, bearing little relation to reality - 'a fantasy of a world that never was' (Hewison, 1987: 137-138). An analogous view is presented by Shanks & Tilley (1992), who claim that history museums and heritage displays are ideological institutions, creating a particular historical narrative, by distorting and misrepresenting the past. This then leads to the production of an idealised past that is 'but a death mask of the present' (Shanks & Tilley, 1992: 85). By presenting a sanitised, 'soft-glow' picture of the past,

conflict, labour and hardship are suppressed and hidden (Bender, 1992: 737). Furthermore, Wright claims (1985) that heritage presentations incorporate an element of 'imagined transformation', in which the visitor is invited to embark upon an imaginary journey through time and 'visit' the past. This transition from 'reading the past' to 'visiting the past' promotes a notion of the past as another 'country', distinct and separate from the present (1985: 77). Walsh (1992) also criticises this notion of 'time-travel', as a dangerous, anti-critical mode of representation. "The promotion of the idea that we can travel back in time implies that the providers of heritage, 'know' the past, and therefore, belies the fact that all our pasts are constructed in the present" (1992: 104). Likewise, Bender (1992) criticises the attempt to "freeze the past... They create origin myths rather than a sense of ongoing historical process" (ibid.: 736).

The idea of 'travelling back in time' to an imaginary, detached, 'world of the past', promoted the concepts of 'empathy' and 'experience', which in turn have prompted the development of 'high tech' methods of presentation. Multimedia experiences, like the heritage ride, combine visual images with 'sensory images' such as sound, smell and even heat, thereby stimulating not only our intellect, but also our senses and emotions. According to Walsh (1992) the extensive use of these presentations produces an artificial, inaccurate representation of the past, which contributes to our 'historical amnesia'. Heritage experiences, he argues, are more of a tourist attraction than an important educational experience. "As such, these presentations fall into an almost undefined category. They are not theme parks, in the Disneyland or Alton Towers mould, neither can they be considered didactic experience" (1992: 100). Comparing heritage attractions to Disneyland, Walsh stresses their similarity, in both style and method of presentation. By taking images from the past and using them to create a scene that is simultaneously different yet familiar, they produce a spectacle, which is at once both exciting and safe. Walsh further maintains that the entertainment attribute of the presentation, the medium itself, is emphasised over the historical message, engulfing the educational message. Thus, "the medium becomes the message" (ibid.: 105).

Frequently viewed as a form of 'Hyper Reality' (see Eco, 1987), the 'Disneyfication' of Heritage attractions is another controversial topic. Most museum curators perceive Disneyland as the epitome of "market-driven pandering to the lowest common denominator of public tastes" (Belk, 1995: 124). However, King (1990) claims that museums have much to learn from the readily scorned 'Disneyland Approach', which is

able to reach a much broader public, in a far more effective way. "Instead of remaining a bastion of elite culture, museums on the Disney model are more egalitarian, full of life, and dynamic rather than forbidding" (King, 1991, in: Belk, 1995: 124).

Merriman (1991) centres his arguments on a similar notion of - 'opening up museums'. He stresses the importance of removing the cultural barriers, which have been deterrents to wider participation in the past, thereby enabling museums and heritage presentations to fulfil their democratic potential, as 'People's Universities' and as one of the principal means of gaining access to the past. Likewise, Bennett (1995) promotes a pluralistic philosophy of tolerance, equal access and multi-perspective presentations. "Museums should be equally open and accessible to all... they should adequately represent the cultures and values of different sections of the public" (1995: 90). This can be seen as part of a more general trend of cultural democratisation, generating "a basis for new kinds of equality, knowledge and social development, which were previously unimaginable, let alone achievable, for anything but a tiny minority of the population" (Miller, 1987: 5).

This cultural democratisation process has been linked to Postmodernist philosophies, that began to emerge during the 1960s, promoting a 'dissolving of boundaries', not only between 'high' and 'low' cultures, but also between different cultural forms (Urry 1990: 82; Davis, 1999: 54). The new linkages between art and commerce mark a new chapter in 'museum evolution' as well. Defined by Moore (1997) as an 'Age of Paradox' - where displays of 'high culture' concur with displays of 'popular culture', openly celebrating branded consumer goods as something integral to everyday twentieth century life and therefore worth presenting as historical subject matter (Belk, 1995: 110-111; Moore, 1997: 1-3; and Barnard, 2002: 22-24).

A new mode of museum presentation has also emerged, one that modifies the museum as a whole, re-organising its spaces, collections and displays. The idea of 'open storage', in which all museum objects and all curator knowledge are constantly available and accessible, has recently been implemented in several Canadian and American museums (cf. Ames, 1992; and Clifford 1999). "In addition to what gets shown in museums, attention needs also to be paid to the processes of showing, who takes part in those processes, and their consequences for the relations they establish between the museum and the visitor" (Bennett, 1995: 103).

Museums began to modify their interior design and decor, attempting to generate a more welcoming environment. "Shops, restaurants, rest and orientation areas occupy spaces that in the past would have contained objects and displays. The percentage of space within the building allowed for display of objects is reduced in favour of spaces to display people" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 202). Museums, as Weil (2002) demonstrates, transformed from being 'about something' to 'being for somebody', their focus, and prime responsibility, shifting from - caring, first and foremost, for their collections; to - caring, first and foremost, for their visitors (2002: 30-31). People, rather than objects, have become the core interest of museums. Regarding exhibitions as 'marketed products', and visitors as 'consumers', or 'clients', visitors are now offered numerous opportunities for active involvement (see Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 210; Ambrose & Paine, 1993: 17-25; and Macdonald, 1998: 118-119). "Where in the past, the experience of visiting a museum was two-dimensional... a slow, controlled, surveyed walk past completed displays, designed without the needs or interests of the visitor in mind, now experiences are three-dimensional. A museum visit can include theatre or 'living history' in social history collections... some science centre exhibits are only complete when the visitor / client operates or uses them" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 210).

The people-centred museum, where both the presentation and the 'service' are produced 'for the people, by the people', reflects the Postmodernist influence of the late 1960s, which was manifested in the American Neighbourhood or Community Museums, as well as in the Ecomuseums that began to emerged in France and Canada at that time. In 1966, Dillon Ripley, the then director of the Smithsonian Institute, established the first Neighbourhood Museum in, and for, the local community of Anacostia, Washington DC. "The museum exhibitions explored the community's history, African themes, the social situation of blacks and particularly women... The experience of Anacostia proved to be a real inspiration, and other neighbourhood museums were created - in Brooklyn, Detroit, Atlanta, Springfield, Tucson - across the USA. Like Skansen, it changed the ways that curators thought about museums" (Davis, 1999: 50-51). The Ecomuseum Movement in France and Canada was also associated with community regeneration, encouraging a much greater involvement of local people in the development of museum displays (Macdonald, 1998: 15). The underlying aspiration was to provide "a mirror in which a population could seek to recognise itself, and explore its relationship to the physical environment, as well as to previous generations..." (Poulot, 1994: 66).

Thereby, generating an engagement with the past that is linked to the present, and connecting people, places and ages. Thus the Ecomuseum was at once, an interpretation of space, as well as an expression of time, where the displays "reach back before the appearance of man, ascend the course of the prehistoric and historical times in which he lived and arrive finally at man's present. It also offers a vista of the future..." (ibid.: 67-68). In this sense, the Ecomuseum was also a school, or laboratory, where local people were encouraged to explore their past and their present, as well as have a clearer grasp of their possible futures. Ecomuseums accentuated local identity, territory, landscape, a sense of history and continuity, collectively creating a stronger sense of belonging (ibid.). Furthermore, the New Museology movement advocated "revitalising techniques of display, exhibition and communication. Ultimately altering the traditional relationship between the institution and the public. One spoke of active Museology, popular Museology... rural and urban ecomuseums" (Poulot, 1994: 67). The idea was to emphasise 'limitless diversity', thereby suggesting that the museum can be anything the local people and the museum professionals want it to be (Davis, 1999: 68).

During the 1980s and 1990s, local history museums and various community displays, primarily concerned with 'empowering local people', became a prevalent phenomenon in museum culture. Special exhibitions jointly produced by local people and the museum's staff were becoming more widespread, including projects like 'Gallery 33' in Birmingham (see Peirson, 1992), which centred on a pluri-cultural portray of everyday life; as well as 'The People's Show' in Walsall (see Mullen, 1994), where local residents were invited to present their private collections in the museum. History museums, on both national and local levels, have begun to acknowledge cultural diversity, initiating the representation of the 'previously neglected presence and contribution of minority ethnic communities' (Merriman, 1997: 119). This trend is noticeably exemplified by projects such as the 'Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas', which was produced and presented at the Museum of London (1991-1992), later becoming an outreach, 'Museum On The Move', travelling exhibition (ibid.: 119-133). The project's aim was to "challenge the 'them' and 'us' mentality by showing that all communities come ultimately from overseas... [and in a broader sense] to establish the parameters of a new approach to London's history, the ultimate aim of which was to incorporate the previously hidden history of cultural diversity into the museum's permanent galleries... [as well as] emphasize the importance for museums of putting a human face on the past" (ibid.: 122).

By employing multi-vocal, open-ended modes of display, in conjunction with 'hands-on' exhibitions, open-spaces, and active audience participation, museums have begun to dim their absolute authority over knowledge, as well as their absolute control over their visitors. This has led to a greater popularity of museums and a more extensive museum consumption by the general public. Nevertheless, this new mode of presentation is often censored by the critics for generating a "total" approach to knowledge. "The total experience (in 'living history' or interactive exhibits), the total immersion (in gallery workshops and events), can have the function, in the apparently democratised environment of the museum marketplace, of soothing, of silencing, of quieting questions, of closing minds" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 214-215). And yet, recent case studies (cf. Miles & Zavala, 1994; Stone & Molyneaux, 1994) seem to indicate the opposite, claiming that these new modes of museum display stimulate thinking and questioning, encouraging critical viewing and further study [3]. Whatever the case, these modern developments have complicated the debate on the multifaceted role and image of museums - as both a place of education, and a place of entertainment; a sacred temple of exclusion, and a public forum of empowerment.

From Counting Visitors To Visitors Who Count [4]

A Visitor Studies Review

The twentieth century re-emergence of populist, commercialised museums and the subsequent theoretical and practical 'shift' towards a more people-centred orientation, as described above, gave rise to a new research subject - the visitor study. The following review charts the 'evolution' of visitor studies, from early surveys to present-day research.

Early Surveys

While simple counting of visitor numbers has taken place since, at least, the early nineteenth century, visitors' characteristics and behaviour were not of particular interest until the twentieth century (Merriman, 2000: 42). The first study to monitor the *behaviour* of museum visitors was published in the USA, by Benjamin Gilman in 1916.

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[3] *A broader examination of these issues is presented in sections three and four.*
[4] *A variation on a theme from Hooper-Greenhill's - **"Counting Visitors or Visitors Who Count?"** (1988).*

Centring upon the subject of 'museum fatigue', Gilman examined a variety of exhibition design factors, evaluating the physical and mental effect they had on visitors and their attention spans. However, it took another twelve years until the next visitor studies were published (between 1928 and 1936) by Robinson and Melton, two psychologists from Yale University, who are credited with being the 'fathers' of visitor studies in the USA. Robinson and Melton's studies centred upon the examination of visitors' behavioural characteristics, attention spans and learning. Much like Gilman's earlier work, these fundamental publications were largely ignored by the museum community at the time (see Loomis, 1987: 21-23; Shettel, 1989: 129; and Hein, 1998: 44-49).

The 1940s saw yet another decline in visitor studies, which may well be accounted for, at least to some extent, by the Second World War. However, this further decline was also an outcome of what Shettel (1989) defines as a 'lack of interest in the visitor' that was prevalent at the time - "...it could be said for many institutions in those days that presentation was more important than interpretation; that showing what the museum had was more important than making what it showed intelligible to the visitor" (1989: 129).

The first full-scale survey, which according to Merriman (2000) set the pattern for all subsequent in-house surveys of museum visitors, was conducted by Niehoff in 1952, at the *Milwaukee Public Museum*. Niehoff's survey addressed both the visitors' attitudes and their demographics, thus enabling comparisons between the museum's visitor profile and the local population's demographic profile, according to census data (Merriman, 2000: 42). A similar survey was carried out in the UK, at the *Ulster Museum*, by Doughty in 1968. Henceforward this kind of visitor survey became the principal means of gathering information on museum users. However, as Merriman (2000) acknowledges - "...the apparent ease with which surveys can be carried out has led to many low standards, criticised to great effect by Loomis (1973). His main criticism is their frequent lack of thoroughness... so that the results are unrepresentative of all visitors. In addition, surveys only tend to be 'snapshot' profiles of visitor composition at a certain period... Few [surveys], however, have been able to suggest why certain groups consistently tend not to go to museums..." (2000: 43-44). The study presented in this thesis attempts to address this lacuna by combining and comparing qualitative and quantitative data from 'snapshot' surveys and observations, various interviews and, in particular, long-term ethnographic research [5].

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[5] *The complementing interdisciplinary-methods employed in this study are described in detail in the fieldwork review.*

'Awakening' And 'Evolution'

The 'shift' towards an emphasis upon people rather than objects, which was influenced by Postmodernist philosophies and their manifestation in American Neighbourhood Museums and French Ecomuseums (see Poulot, 1994; Davis, 1999; Macdonald, 1998) generated new levels of interest in visitor studies during the late 1960s. This was followed by three decades of ever-increasing activity, in terms of research and publication (e.g. Hood, 1983; Prince, 1983; Bitgood, 1987, 1991; Loomis, 1973, 1987; Screven, 1974, 1986, 1990; Shettel, 1988, 1989, 1993; Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000; Bicknell & Farmelo, 1993; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; McManus, 1989a, 1989b, 1994; Merriman, 1989a, 1989b, 1991; Macdonald, 1992, 1993, 2002a; Bagnall, 1996; Handler & Gable, 1997; Katriel, 1997; and Clifford, 1999 - to name but a few), as well as the establishment of the ILVS (*International Laboratory for Visitor Studies*) in the USA, and the VSG (*Visitors Studies Group*) in the UK.

It is imperative to locate the 'awakening' of visitor studies and their subsequent 'evolution' in the social, political and cultural contexts of the time. For it is within these contexts that the three main approaches to the study of museum consumption, namely - the *psychological approach;* the *cultural approach;* and the *synthesis approach;* have emerged.

The Psychological Approach

The *psychological approach* to visitor studies has been the prevailing research paradigm in the USA. It focuses upon the individual and explains incentives (and deterrents) for museum visiting as deriving from the individual's leisure motivations and needs. However, as Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri (2000) point out, there is no attempt to place museum consumption in a socio-cultural context and therefore no explanation is provided as to why the individual's motivations and needs occur (2000: 11-12).

Taking its cue from work in cognitive and educational psychology, most of the leading studies conducted under this paradigm, both in the USA and elsewhere centre upon the evaluation and enrichment of the educational experience in museums (see Merriman, 2000: 75-76; and Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2000: 11-18). Prime among these are - Falk & Dierking's (1992, 2000) seminal studies of visitors' museum experiences, learning and 'meaning making'; Screven's work (1974, 1986, 1992, 1993) on museums

as learning environments, emphasising visitor motivation, attention and education; Shettel (1988, 1989) and Hein's (1995a, 1995b, 1998) extended reviews on the assessment and evaluation of teaching and learning in museums; and the behavioural / educational work carried out by McManus (1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1993a) at the London Science Museum and the London Natural History museum.

In terms of investigating museum visiting and non-visiting, the most influential studies to date within this paradigm were conducted by Hood (1983, 1989) in the USA, and Prince (1983) in the UK. This corpus of work does not focus upon the individual's learning per se, but rather on their general attitudes and motivation toward museum visiting. Based on behavioural psychology, these studies concentrate on the importance of what Hood (1983) terms 'psychographic variables' - an individual's attitudes toward, and perceptions of the museum and museum visiting, which, according to Prince (1983) are derived from their leisure needs and past experiences. Such psychographic variables are seen as a more useful means of explaining museum visiting patterns than the demographic variables used in traditional visitor surveys (see Merriman 2000: 75-76).

The main contribution of the psychological approach is that by focussing on perception, attitudes and motivation, it introduces the individual into the equation, thus presenting museum consumption as more complex than the mere outcome of demographic factors. However, while the small-scale psychological approach acknowledges the importance of socio-cultural factors it does not engage with them, and is essentially apolitical, thereby treating people's attitudes to museums as "simply different rather than the product of a hierarchical culture" (Merriman, 2000: 77-78). Consequently, as Merriman observes, by effectively disregarding demographic factors and avoiding social analysis, studies based upon the psychological approach cannot explain the variants or origins of people's attitudes to museums "and thus [have] to side-step the political and ideological roots of museum visiting which lie at the heart of an understanding of it as a cultural phenomenon" (Merriman, 2000: 76).

The Cultural Approach

By contrast, the *cultural approach* to visitor studies disregards the analysis of individual motivations and needs, as presented by cognitive and educational psychology studies, focusing instead on the wider cultural and political contexts of museum consumption (Merriman, 2000: 76; Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2000: 11).

Bourdieu's work (1969, 1977, 1984) is central to this approach, as he is the only major social theorist who has dealt with museums and museum visiting, as part of a wider study of hierarchy, power and privilege (see Merriman, 1989b: 161-163; 2000: 78-81). Following Bourdieu, the dynamics of museum consumption can be seen as arising from the dynamics of a hierarchical culture. Within this context, social life is analysed in terms of privilege, and differential access to power, both economic and symbolic. Bourdieu maintains that museum visiting, like aesthetic appreciation, is socially determined, and serves as a mechanism whereby *cultural capital* is produced, proclaimed and transmitted from one generation to the next (Fyfe & Ross, 1996: 133). This kind of cultural knowledge, Bourdieu emphasises, is imparted from one's habitus - the early socialisation within the family, and at school. In other words, museum displays are best understood by individuals whose habitus predisposes them to acquire the cultural capacity to do so. By the same token, non-visitors lack the cultural proficiency to decipher what Merriman (1989b) defines as the 'museum visiting code' and therefore exclude themselves from this activity (Merriman, 1989b: 161-163).

The main contribution of the large-scale cultural approach, epitomised by the work of Bourdieu, is the introduction of social context, and the dynamic element arising from it, the lack of which was highlighted by Merriman (2000) as the main shortcoming of the small-scale psychological approach (2000: 77-78).

However, the main flaw in the cultural approach is that it can be seen as deterministic, and that it makes no allowances for personal dynamics. Bourdieu's work, in particular, has been criticised for overemphasising social class. Merriman (2000) observes that - "...as a result of his concentration on art galleries, Bourdieu is purely concerned with the oppressive aspects of museums and their role in social reproduction, and his argument becomes a more sophisticated version of the dominant ideology thesis" (Merriman, 2000: 82). Furthermore, Bourdieu's work is reflective of a specific time, place and society - France in the mid-1960s - which limits the applicability of his conclusions to present-day society and museums in Britain. Notably, Bourdieu's work pre-dates the 'heritage boom', which transformed contemporary museum consumption.

One of the more recent studies under the cultural paradigm is Handler & Gable's (1997) ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg, which is, first and foremost, a critique of the social production of museum messages, and the representation of a politicised history.

The principal flaw in this study lies in its almost-exclusive focus on cultural production and reproduction, at the expense of a more in-depth investigation of consumption and experience. Although visitors were occasionally interviewed, after certain presentations and re-enactment performances, there was little attempt to understand the *experience* of visiting this kind of heritage site - 'from the visitor's point of view' - which is the essence of my study into local history museums and their consumption.

Clifford's (1999) paper on museums as 'contact zones' centres upon similar issues of cultural representations and cultural exchanges. Clifford suggests viewing the museum as a 'contact zone', which he defines as "an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographical and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect... an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship - a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull (1999: 192-193). Correspondingly, Katriel's (1997) work on Israeli settlement museums focuses upon the cultural representation, articulation and negotiation of contested histories and their meta-narratives. Both studies are concerned, predominantly, with broad cultural theory and institutionalised cultural production, rather than with the everyday practices of museum consumption, which is the focus of the study presented here.

Synthesis

The New Approach

Reviewing the earlier approaches to visitor studies demonstrates that, on their own, neither the psychological nor the cultural paradigms can provide a full and nuanced understanding of museum consumption. Consequently, there is a clear need for a broader perspective that merges the small-scale of the psychological studies with the large-scale of the cultural approach. For, as Merriman (2000) points out - "both [approaches] can provide useful insights into the phenomenon of museum visiting. Both, however, have limitations, but by combining elements from both, a comprehensive account can be formulated" (2000: 82). Indeed, many contemporary museum visitor studies are syntheses, located along a psychological-cultural continuum. The most important among these studies are - Kelly's work (1982, 1983) on leisure choices and leisure opportunities; Merriman's analysis of attitudes towards heritage and museum visiting (1989a, 1989b, 1991); Macdonald's studies of the Science Museum in London (1992, 1993, 2002a); and Bagnall's study of heritage-site consumption (1996).

Kelly's (1982, 1983) work on 'leisure opportunities' is a clear attempt to integrate the small-scale of the psychological paradigm with the large-scale of the cultural approach. The broader perspective offered by this combination provides a fuller explanation of museum consumption and non-consumption, by demonstrating that ultimately leisure choices are the outcome of both socio-cultural and psychological factors. In other words, an individual's participation in a leisure activity is dependent upon their perception of the activity as a 'leisure opportunity', which in turn is dependent upon both socio-cultural factors, such as family socialisation and schooling (which are akin to Bourdieu's notion of habitus) and individual, psychological factors. Merriman's analyses (1989a, 1989b, 1991, 2000) of museum and heritage visiting as a cultural phenomenon similarly combine both cultural and psychological elements, which are then incorporated into an explanatory theory of the deterrents to museum visiting. Although his study is based solely on postal survey data, Merriman's extensive literature review and detailed, integrated critique of his data provide a valuable basis for further investigation and comparison, as the study presented here will demonstrate.

Macdonald's innovative studies of the Science Museum in London (1992, 1993, 2002a) can be viewed as pioneering in this field, as they were the first to utilise ethnography as the principal method of studying museum culture. While her latest ethnography (2002a) is concerned, primarily, with the processes of museum production, her earlier work, and especially her concept of 'cultural imagining' (1992) and approach to 'meaning making' (see Silverman, 1995) have proven extremely useful for the study presented here, as they highlight the fact that visitors are not passive recipients of knowledge and ideas, and that their readings of museum presentations do not always coincide with the producers' intentions and objectives. Bagnall's (1996) study of two heritage-based sites in Northwest England - Wigan Pier and the Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester - highlights the importance of what she terms physical, emotional and imaginary 'mappings', which generate an 'emotional realism' that separates this leisure choice from other forms of entertainment and cultural consumption (1996: 245). Bagnall's work provides an important contribution to the study of heritage-based sites and their visitors. However, while her analysis is extremely useful in explaining peoples' consumption of such sites, it is not always helpful in explaining peoples' consumption, or lack thereof, of local history museums, seeing that local history museums are a specific case study of museum consumption, as the following thesis sections will jointly demonstrate.

The Presented Study

Core Objectives

The study presented here, which is similarly conceived as a synthesis of psychological and cultural elements, aims to address the issues of contemporary museum consumption - from the consumer's point of view - with an emphasis upon local history museums. This specific milieu has been absent from the anthropological debate on museums, which customarily centres on cultural reproduction and representation (cf. Katriel, 1997; Handler & Gable, 1997; and Clifford, 1999). Macdonald's extensive work at the London Science Museum (1992, 1993, 2002a) and Bagnall's (1996) analysis of heritage-site consumption are notable, ethnographic exceptions to the typical research carried out by both Museum-Ethnography and visitor studies. Nevertheless, these innovative bodies of work do not consider the particular case study of local history museums and their consumption. The presented study attempts to fill this lacuna by establishing a detailed, analytical, ethnographic account of a local history museum and its consumption. The analysis will therefore focus on people's discourse, practice and overall experience of museums and museum visiting in general, and Croydon's local history museum in particular, with the aim of attaining a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon and its role within current education, recreation and consumption cultures.

Advocating a synthesis approach, the analysis incorporates and further develops the principal bodies of work cited in the above review. For example, Bourdieu's notion of habitus and his emphasis upon the importance of early experiences is further explored and applied to personal history rather than hierarchical social structure, which is more akin to Kelly's approach (1982, 1983). Building upon the work of Falk & Dierking (1992, 1997, 2000) the analysis proceeds with the aim of establishing that the quality of early museum-visiting experiences, along with the quality of their social contexts, has a profound and enduring effect on museum-visiting practices in later life.

The thesis aspires to further contribute to the field of visitor studies by addressing various aspects of museum consumption that have been largely ignored in previous analyses. Prime among these are a comparison between shopping and museum visiting; an in-depth exploration of collectors' perception and consequent practices of museum consumption, which demonstrates how different types of collectors have distinctly different attitudes towards museums; a proposal for expanding the traditional,

rudimentary dyad of 'visitors' and 'non-visitors' to include a new, distinctive category, which I define as - 'gallery goers'; and, finally, the overall emphasis upon viewing museum visiting as a complex, 'transitional' activity that is located between 'choice' and 'chore' and therefore is neither 'leisure' per se, nor 'labour' per se, but rather a means of, what I term - 'cultural provisioning'.

Nevertheless, the most significant contributions this study aspires to make are - the much-expanded perception of a local history museum, as a figurative meeting point of - *museum*, *past*, *place* and *people*; as well as the realisation that the consumption of local history museums is linked not only to the dynamics of learned leisure practices, and the enduring effects of early museum experiences, but also, and perhaps mainly, to notions of *localism* (Macdonald, 1997a; Wallman, 1998), history and locality, identity and belonging. These elements come together to create a new view of local history museums and their consumption, illustrated by the *'Flow of Influence'* and *'Past, Place & People'* models presented in the concluding section. The later model illustrates the overall conclusion of this study, demonstrating how the correlation between our personal identity and the museum's presentation indicates the extent of our interest in the museum, and its consequent consumption.

The presented study is not only a synthesis of approaches, but also a synthesis of methodologies, seeing that the core ethnographic strategy of participant observation is complemented with a variety of qualitative and quantitative, interdisciplinary methods, which are described in detail in the fieldwork review. By demonstrating the merit and contribution of each method and the 'layer' of data it provides, the study aims to exemplify both the potential of an ethnographic approach and the advantages of employing a synthesis of cross-disciplinary methods.

Applying this approach to the various social-cultural contexts explored in this study, namely - the museum environment (comparing different museums with the core filed site of *Lifetimes*); the school environment (comparing different schools); and especially the home - enables a much broader exploration of contemporary museum culture. Choosing *Lifetimes*, Croydon's innovative local history museum, as a fieldwork focus provides a rich and multi-faceted case study, as the following field site review will demonstrate.

Ethnographic Framework
And Field Site Review

A Multifaceted Field Site

Conducting fieldwork in a complex urban setting such as Croydon heightens the importance of acknowledging its diversity of histories, landscapes and communities. Croydon is the tenth largest municipality in England, with an estimated population of 330,587 residents [6]. Administratively it is the southern most borough of London, stretching from Crystal Palace in the North to Coulsdon and the M25 in the South [see Figure 1.1]. The borough encompasses a diverse mosaic of urban and suburban landscapes - from parks and woodlands to car parks and skyscrapers. MacDonald (1992) summarises Croydon's landscape diversity as "densely packed Victorian terraces in the North, Tudor villas and golf-courses in the South and a town centre dominated by shopping precincts" (1992: 21).

Croydon began as a rural settlement, gradually developing into its current, urban form. Growing from a small, eighth century Saxon settlement into a market town, it became famous for its association with the Archbishops of Canterbury, who, between the eighth and eleventh centuries, utilised a variety of local palaces as their Summer Retreats. The arrival of the 'South Coast Railway' in the 1840s led to Croydon's dramatic growth and consequent nineteenth and early twentieth century flourishing.

Unfortunately, Croydon was heavily bombed during World War II (more so than any other part of Greater London) and severely damaged as a result. However, it was the urban re-development of the town's centre in the 1960s that led to its widespread image, which still prevails (even among some of its residents) of a boring, faceless "grey, suburban no-man's land" (MacDonald, 1995: 166). The 1965 municipal merge between what is now the northern and southern halves of Croydon (which were previously a South East London borough, and a part of Surrey, respectively) made matters worse. The two sectors were, and still are, very different in socio-economic and demographic terms. South Croydon is significantly more affluent than North Croydon, which in turn is more densely populated and more ethnically diverse (MacDonald, 1998: 58).

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[6] *Resident Population Figures, 2001 Census.*
Source: Office of National Statistics Website - www.statistics.gov.uk - Last Date of Access - December 30th 2003.

Over 20% of Croydon's residents define themselves as being of African-Caribbean, Southeast Asian, or Irish descent. The majority of these ethnic-origin groups reside in the northern parts of the borough. It is not surprising then, that for many residents the old 'North/South' divide is still very 'real', while the 'borough of Croydon' is often perceived as merely an administrative entity (cf. Fussell, 1995; MacDonald, 1998).

The old town of Croydon is located at the centre of the contemporary borough [see Figure 1.2] and unlike the rest of Croydon, is viewed as a distinct place. The centre's urban, 1960s style, redevelopment soon fell out of fashion, lending it the scornful nickname of 'Mini-Manhattan', which came to dominate the borough's image. Croydon became the butt of jokes, regularly characterised in the press and media as the ultimate epitome of 'Soulless Suburbia'. The mocking media coverage had a further distancing effect on the local residents, worsening Croydon's already-complicated 'identity crisis' (MacDonald, 1998: 59-63). The borough's 'identity crisis' was the core reasoning behind the politics that led to the formation of the *Clocktower* centre and the *Lifetimes* museum.

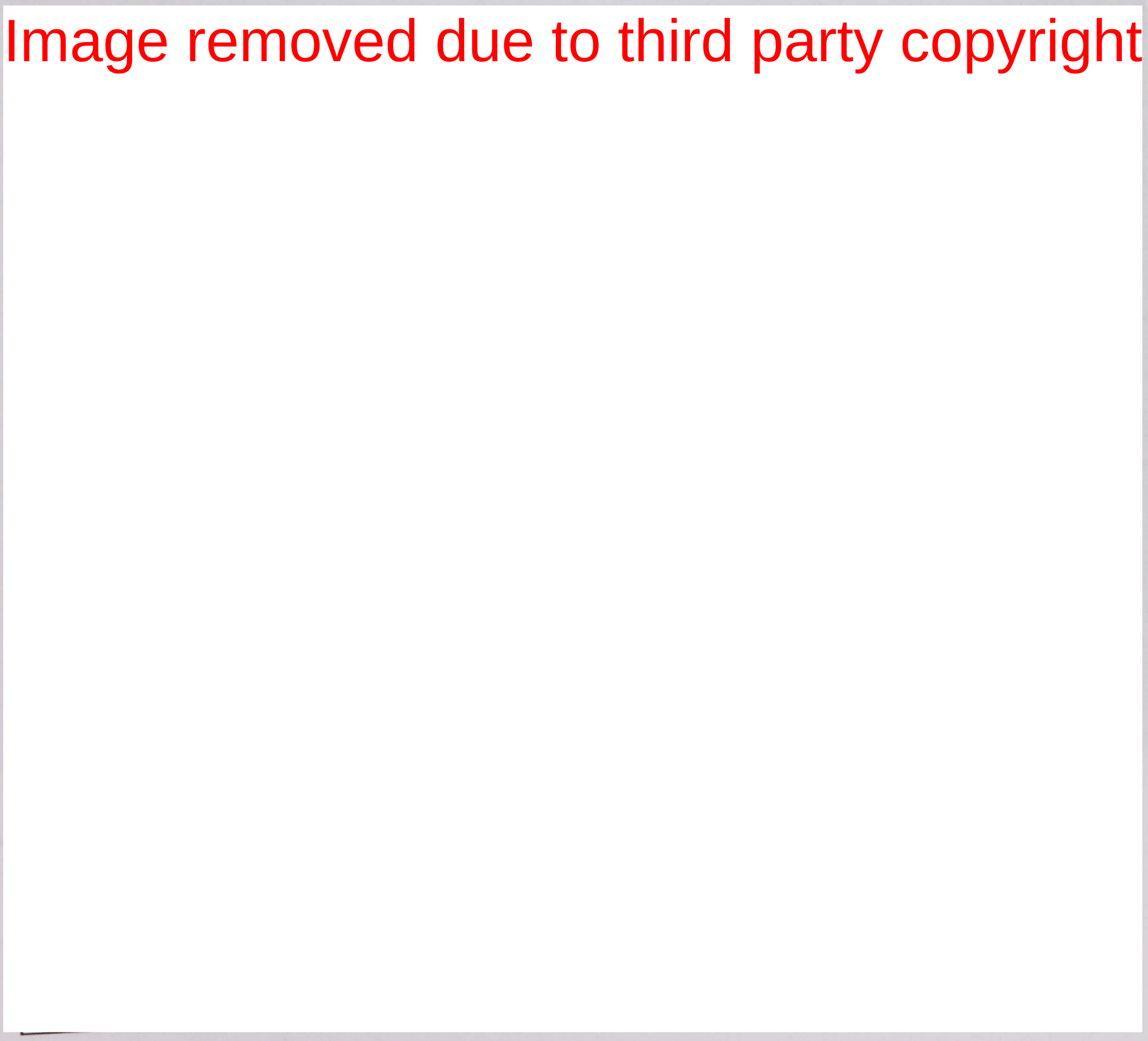

Figure 1.1: The London Boroughs (Area Map)

[Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey. An EDINA Digimap/JISC Supplied Service]

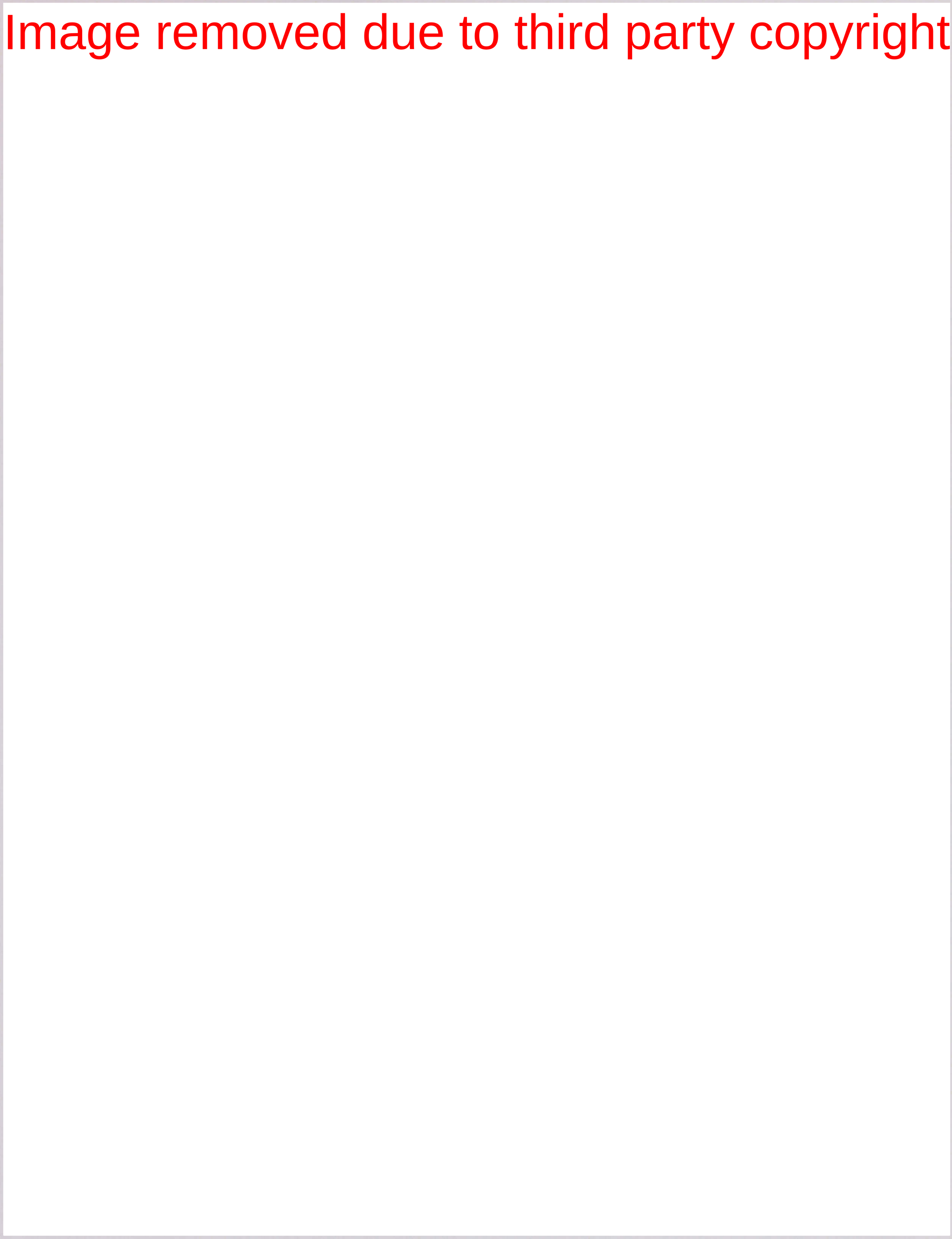

Figure 1.2: The London Borough of Croydon (Area Map)

[Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey. An EDINA Digimap/JISC Supplied Service]

A Non-Museum of Non-History

Croydon's *Clocktower* centre is the end result of a fusion between politics and opportunity. The council was persuaded that a cultural centre, located at the very heart of central Croydon, would have a positive impact on the borough's image and economy. The old Victorian town hall and a £30 million land-sale made the construction of the new cultural complex possible. The *Clocktower* centre [see Figure 1.3] was opened in 1995, incorporating a state-of-the-art central library, a tourist information service, art and education facilities, a cinema, a café, a souvenir shop, and three exhibition galleries: the Riesco gallery (which features a collection of Chinese ceramics that was donated by a local resident); a gallery for temporary exhibitions; and a local history museum called - *Lifetimes* (MacDonald, 1998: 62).

Much like the *Clocktower* centre that houses it, the *Lifetimes* museum [see Figure 1.4] was created out of a mixture of agendas, politics and philosophies. Akin to the founding histories of many other, nineteenth century, municipal museums, Croydon's local interest groups (such as the Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society, which was established in 1870 as an environmental and archaeological interest group) continuously campaigned for a local museum, over several decades. "Their voices grew louder when the centre of Croydon was developed in the 1960s. Much of the old town was lost when theatres, cinemas and schools were replaced by multi-story car parks, shopping precincts and office blocks... It was partly in response to this public demand that the councillors decided to include a museum in the development [of a cultural complex]..." (Fussell, 1997: 39).

The new museum service benefited from five years of research prior to its opening. Market research methods were used with local residents to "filter and balance what the politicians and professionals felt [about the form and function of the future museum] and to arrive at a shared vision. Croydon's museum had to be new, different, modern, daring, popular... [It had to be] about roots, empathy, creativity, empowerment..." (MacDonald, 1998: 4 and 15).

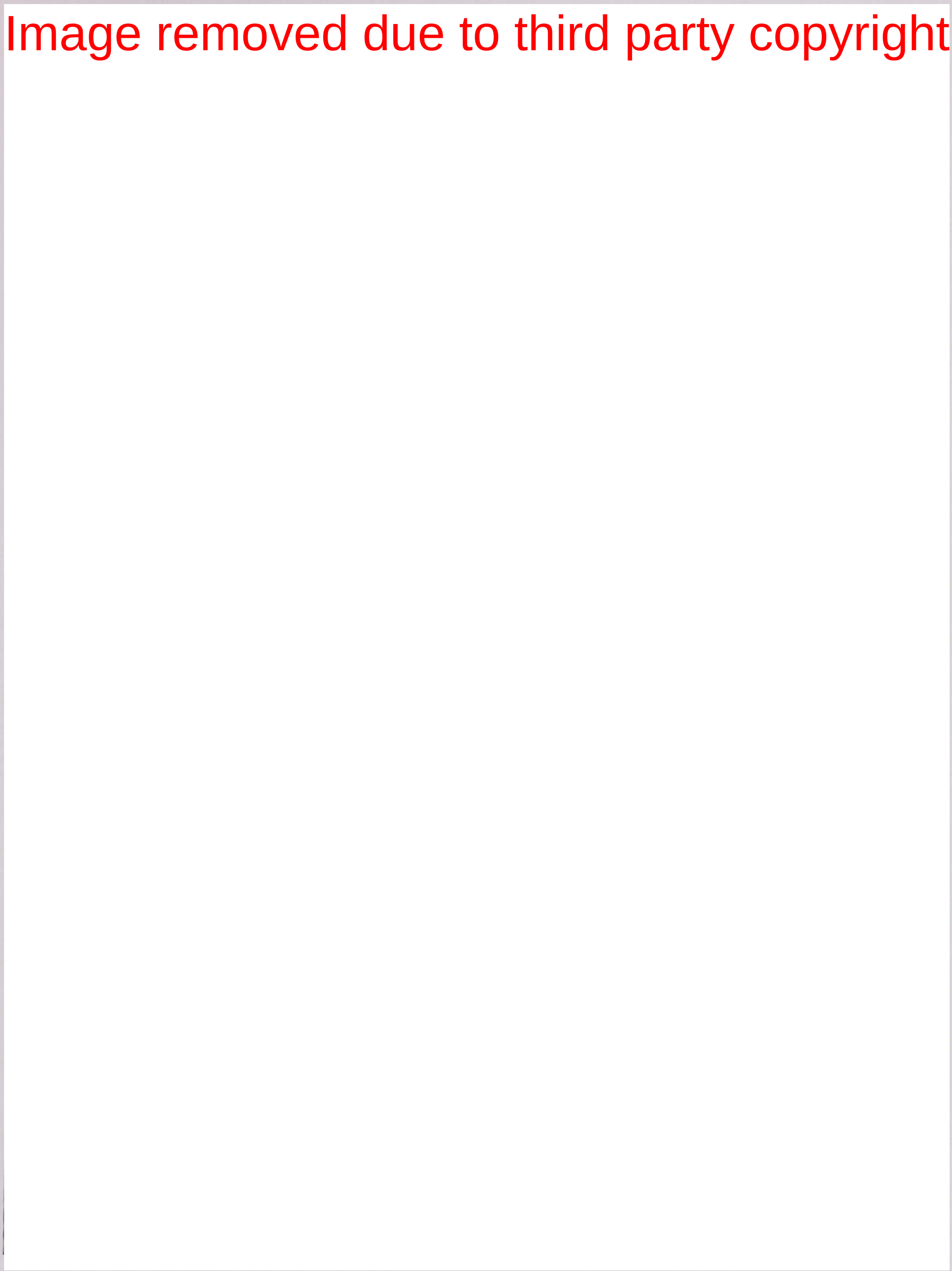

Figure 1.3: Central Croydon – 'The Croydon Clocktower' – Promotional Pamphlet

[Presented with kind permission of Croydon Museum Service]

Figure 1.4: *Lifetimes* – 'History At Your Fingertips' – Promotional Pamphlet

[Presented with kind permission of Croydon Museum Service]

The professionals' objective was to create a museum service that would appeal to a wide range of audiences, attracting a heterogeneous cross-section of local people. Several focus group discussions conducted by the 'Susie Fisher Group' (1990), revealed that people felt ambivalent about Croydon and assumed it had no history because of its modern appearance. Moreover, people's image of history, as well as museums in general, came across as extremely negative. Both were perceived as 'boring', 'dead' and 'static' (Fisher, 1990a and 1990b). As a result, it was decided not to include the words 'Croydon', 'History' or 'Museum', in naming Croydon's new local history museum. *Lifetimes* was then chosen as a manifestation, or rather an intended manifestation, of the museum's focus on recent history that is placed within living-memory and presented through local people's lifetime memoirs. The intention was to highlight the human experience of history and connect the past with the present and the future, thereby enabling visitors to "see themselves, in some form, in the display" (MacDonald, 1998: 6).

The historical presentation was consequently divided into six main chronological-sections, covering a period from 1830 to the present-day and the future. The displays were set to encompass a wide range of issues and experiences, from historical and contemporary events to everyday-life, including topics that are often absent from traditional museum displays, like sex and love. Many subjects were linked to national or global events, in order to emphasise the influences and connections between the local and the global; as well as between past, present and future, thereby highlighting the ongoing process of history (ibid.: 12).

The museum was then faced with the challenge of how to present different peoples' histories. The diversity of public opinion, as indicated by the market research, was prominent in terms of both ethnicity and age. Young White adults thought the museum should represent a wide range of 'Croydon people', highlighting ethnic differences. Young Black and Asian adults felt it was essential that their history be represented as an integral part of mainstream British history, not separate or different, while the older Black adults wanted the museum to represent their ethnic struggle. The older Asian adults hoped for more of a cultural exchange, and were keen to have an opportunity to explain their culture to other local people.

There was also a hard core of older White adults, who felt threatened and undermined by the idea of 'subverting', as they saw it, an English museum to "tell the story of another culture... After a discussion about the proposed museum with a local history society, an elderly White local historian approached with the words - 'I hope you're not going to have these ethnic minorities in the displays. We Croydonians have been waiting years for a museum, its ours!'" (MacDonald, 1998: 7).

The museum service's next challenge was choosing the practical means and modes of display. The decision to employ multimedia presentations (in the form of touch-screen computer displays that accompany the exhibited objects) was made to facilitate three of the museum professionals' core ideas: (1) Providing a depth and richness of information that would go beyond conventional text displays; (2) Enabling visitors to construct their own museum exploration, by offering non-linear 'investigation paths' that link subjects, objects and time; (3) Making the museum seem "more modern, more alive... [full of] colour and buzz" (MacDonald, 1998: 11). Utilising computer touch-screens as a core method of presentation also enabled the museum professionals to make the most of the gallery's very limited space - only 275.5 square meters (Fussell, 1997).

The museum service has been in full operation since March 1995. In its first year it attracted over 124,000 visitors, an astonishing figure compared with most London Borough museums. The museum has won six major awards, including the 'Interpret Britain Award' for 1995 and the 'National Heritage Multimedia' Award for 1996, and is internationally renowned for its declared aim to reach new audiences and its emphasis on interactive displays (MacDonald, 1997: 2). The applied aspects of this study, which are discussed in detail in the following fieldwork review, were designed to complement the earlier market-research projects that were conducted at the *Lifetimes* museum, prior to, and shortly after its launch. The objectives of this portion of the study were to provide a current, detailed report on the museum's visitor profile and visiting dynamics, followed by an in-depth analysis of the findings' implications and significance.

Methodological Framework
And Fieldwork Review

Introduction

"Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretative one in search of meaning"
(Geertz, 1973: 5)

This thesis is, first and foremost, an ethnographic study, which means it follows the core principles of ethnographic research, inasmuch as it highlights the 'native's point of view' (Malinowski, 1922, in: Schwartzman, 1993) and advocates a contextual, holistic approach. This then generates a comprehensive 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) from which to establish an interpretative analysis, or what Geertz later refers to as a 'translation of culture' (ibid.: 1983).

The main objective of this study was to learn from Croydon's local people about their ways of seeing, using and appropriating museums in general, and their local history museum in particular. As with other, traditional ethnographies, participant observation was employed as the principal strategy for exploring the experience of museum consumption, within its wider context of contemporary education and leisure practices, as well as present-day perceptions of 'past', 'place' and 'community'.

The fieldwork practice of participant observation promotes what Agar (1996) has termed an 'inside-outsider's' perspective, a duality of simultaneously experiencing the field through subjective participation, whilst maintaining a 'scientific distance' through objective observation and recording. Thus, participant observation triggers triangulation, not only because of its twofold nature, which is instrumental in creating a broad basis of knowledge, but also because it entails an awareness of potential discrepancies between discourse and practice. Comparing what people say with what they do provides a useful means of examining the social role and significance of the studied phenomenon (see Bourdieu, 1977). The presented study takes this notion further by comparing not only what people say with what they do, but also what they don't say (or say reluctantly), and don't do (or do reluctantly).

Following Wolcott's definitions of ethnography (1995), participant observation (1999) and the categories that comprise its practice (ibid.: 45-47) the fieldwork entailed 'experiencing, enquiring and examining' (ibid.: 46). That is to say, personal experiences, observations, conversations and various forms of interviewing, alongside the collection and analysis of secondary data (both qualitative and quantitative) have been the combined 'building blocks' of the research, in terms of process, practice and consequent experience.

Another core component of the fieldwork experience was its 'multi-sited' nature. Advocating Marcus's concept (1998) that cultural identities and activities are constructed by various agents, in different, interconnected contexts and places, the study was designed to include multiple locations and locales (such as museums, schools, and informants' homes), which jointly construct the interrelated contexts of museum perception and consumption. While, typical 'multi-sited' ethnographies often highlight a 'local-global' interplay and entail a comparative 'world system' study, or 'commodity chain' study (see Marcus, 1998) this ethnography focused upon following local people, in a variety of, often local settings, within the core field site of Croydon. Dividing time and attention between the various locales of this study has been taxing at times, but ultimately rewarding, as it created a multifaceted experience of the field.

The fieldwork experience narrated in this thesis, as well as its consequent interpretations and analysis, are specific to a particular place, and a particular period of time. It is therefore imperative to locate the study within its distinct spatial-temporal boundaries. Fieldwork was conducted between September 1997 and March 2000 [7], in several distinct locations, mostly within the London borough of Croydon. However, the initial stage of research took place prior to the official fieldwork period, in a six-weeks-long pilot study of different local history museums in and around Greater London [8].

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[7] This prolonged fieldwork period was due in part to the multi-sited nature of the study, and in part to it being undertaken as a self-financing, part-time student.

The pilot study comprised of data collecting (in the form of pamphlets, guide books, web-sites, advertisements, and other promotional material) alongside a series of inconspicuous, one-day observations of visitors' conduct, reactions and interactions, which took place at each of the thirty museums I visited. The objectives of sampling such a large variety of local history museums were to familiarise myself with the distinctive characteristics of community museums (from their location, architecture and design, to the style and method of their presentation, promotion and retail), as well as gain a general sense of the typical 'goings on' in local history museums in terms of their everyday visitor dynamics. Above all, the pilot study enabled me to locate potential museum 'candidates' that would be suitable as a research 'focal-point'.

The *Lifetimes* museum captured my attention and interest from the first visit. As an innovative, 'non-museum' of 'non-history', *Lifetimes* offered an intriguing venue from which to explore people's experience of museum consumption. By the same token, Croydon's complex urban setting, and unique 'identity crisis' presented a challenging, yet fascinating location for studying people's perception and appropriation of 'past', 'place' and 'community'. Nevertheless, such challenges had to be acknowledged and taken into account in the process of formulating the overall fieldwork plan and its specific methodological-strategies.

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[8] *The pilot-study survey included the following local history museums -*

1. *Barnet Museum - High Barnet [London Borough of Barnet]*
2. *Bexley Museum - Bexley [London Borough of Bexley]*
3. *Boston Manor House - Brentford [London Borough of Hounslow]*
4. *Bromley Museum - Orpington [London Borough of Bromley]*
5. *Church Farmhouse Museum - Hendon [London Borough of Barnet]*
6. *Croydon Airport Visitor Centre - Croydon [London Borough of Croydon]*
7. *Crystal Palace Museum - Anerley Hill [London Borough of Bromley]*
8. *Cuming Museum - Southwark [London Borough of Southwark]*
9. *Grange Museum Of Community History - Neasden [London Borough of Brent]*
10. *Greenwich Borough Museum - Plumstead [London Borough of Greenwich]*
11. *Gunnersbury Park Museum - Acton [London Borough of Hounslow]*
12. *Hackney Museum - Hackney [London Borough of Hackney]*
13. *Hampstead Museum - Hampstead [London Borough of Camden]*
14. *Harrow Museum & Heritage Centre - Harrow-On-The-Hill [London Borough of Harrow]*
15. *Honeywood Heritage Centre - Carshalton [London Borough of Sutton]*
16. *Lifetimes Museum - Croydon Clocktower Centre [London Borough of Croydon]*
17. *Livesey Museum - Southwark [London Borough of Southwark]*
18. *London Museum Of Jewish Life - Finchley [London Borough of Barnet]*
19. *Merton Heritage Centre - Mitcham [London Borough of Merton]*
20. *Museum Of Richmond - Richmond [London Borough of Richmond Upon Themes]*
21. *Ragged Scholl Museum - Bow [London Borough of Tower Hamlets]*
22. *Shirley Windmill - Croydon [London Borough of Croydon]*
23. *Valence House Museum - Dagenham [London Borough of Barking & Dagenham]*
24. *Vestry House Museum - Walthamstow [London Borough of Waltham Forest]*
25. *Wandsworth Museum - Wandsworth [London Borough of Wandsworth]*

As well as five local heritage centres in Amersham, Harlow, Hertford, St. Albans, and Watford.

Underlining the specific complexities of this study were two fundamental challenges - First, the lack of a traditional 'studied other', which enhanced the necessity of devising ways to 'de-familiarise the familiar'. Second, and perhaps most crucial, the temporality of museum visiting, which placed a special emphasis upon generating frequent, casual meetings and conversations with potential informants, over an extended period of time.

The *Lifetimes* museum provided an effective 'entry point' from which to access and study the field. It became a focal point for data collection and comparisons, as well as a core means for encountering, establishing and expanding potential long-term contacts.

The need to produce 'practical' periodical-reports for the museum service, and especially for the Croydon council members (who were willing to wait for a comprehensive ethnographic analysis, provided they had some kind of 'pragmatic input' along the way) had also influenced the overall fieldwork strategy.

Inspired by the 'politics of inclusion' concept that epitomise contemporary initiatives in Material Culture Studies (see Miller & Tilley, 1996), I decided to incorporate various, complementary, interdisciplinary methods into the fieldwork plan in order to meet the applied requirements of my study and overcome its core challenges.

Fieldwork Review

The following review centres upon the various research strategies employed while conducting fieldwork. Although in practice many of the methods were used simultaneously, they are documented here in two separate data-collecting categories: 'studying discourse' (what people say) and 'studying practice' (what people do), which then lead to a final, combined category that epitomises the essence of ethnography - 'studying the experience'.

Studying Discourse

I began my study of museum-consumption rhetoric, by conducting a visitors' survey for the museum service. Devising the survey's questionnaire (see Oppenheim, 1992) in accordance with Croydon council procedures was instrumental in ascertaining the council's code of conduct and communication style, as well as its political agendas and contemporary emphasis upon equality and access.

A total of fifty visitors were surveyed at the museum, directly following their visit to *Lifetimes*. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) incorporated 'visitor demographic' questions, in census terms, alongside broader (and mostly open-ended) questions about the museum visit they had just experienced, as well as museum consumption in general. Specific attitude-measuring questions, which were initially introduced in Merriman's postal survey (1991), were also incorporated into the questionnaire, in order to enable comparisons with Merriman's results.

The material emerging from the survey, combined with other, secondary sources of data (such as visitor statistics and comment forms) was used to create a preliminary visitor profile, in terms of both demographic characteristics and expressed attitudes. The latter proved especially fruitful, as it enabled comparisons with the various attitudes that were expressed by my informants in subsequent interviews and informal chats. However, the most productive outcome of the survey was the opportunity for making initial contacts with potential informants.

Being aware of Croydon's demographic diversity heightened the need to locate specific target groups from different areas of Croydon Borough and incorporate them in the overall study. The conscious effort to include representatives of these diverse groups enabled the resulting analysis to address issues of locality and belonging (cf. Knox, 1995; Lovell, 1998), class and 'Habitus' (see Bourdieu, 1984; and Crompton, 1993) alongside age, gender and ethnicity. A further requirement that emerged from the field was acknowledging lifestyle choices and sexuality, thereby taking into account the borough's large gay and lesbian community (cf. Fussell, 1997; and MacDonald, 1998).

Overall, I established long-term contacts with eighteen 'visitor' households - six households from each of the three main demographic localities of Croydon (namely: North Croydon, South Croydon and Central Croydon). The chosen, local 'visitor' households represented a variety of characteristics in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, class, lifestyle choices and so on. I had also established long-term contacts with fifteen 'staff' informants, who were part of the regular *Clocktower* team, including - librarians, security guards, cleaners and, in particular, the museum's 'front of house' gallery assistants, and 'back of house' professionals, with whom I had an almost daily contact throughout the fieldwork period. The comparative analysis between the voiced perceptions and observed practices of these two, very different, 'informant groups' proved extremely instrumental in expanding and deepening my understanding of the studied phenomenon.

Most of my initial contacts with potential informants took place at the *Lifetimes* museum, which became my core 'point of entry' to the field. This had an interesting effect on the way my presence was perceived by potential 'visitor' informants. Although I had always presented myself as an Anthropology research-student from UCL, people often associated me with the museum, probably because of the location and circumstance of our first contact. For some this was a deterrent, seeing that being 'from the museum' translated in their perception into being 'from the council'. My presence in these cases was met with suspicion, which hindered co-operation and any consequent long-term contact. Fortunately, the majority of people I approached perceived this ascribed 'museum association' as a positive and useful 'mental link' that helped them 'frame' the situation and consequently feel more at ease with my presence.

My 'foreignness' (as an Israeli, with a slight North-American accent) proved surprisingly instrumental in this regard as well. People were frequently intrigued by my unusual accent and origin, much more so than with my academic studies. Most of the people did not know what Anthropology was, nor were they particularly interested in finding out. For the majority of people I encountered in the field, excluding the *Lifetimes* museum staff-members, I was simply - 'that foreign student from the museum'. Understanding the local ways of seeing and 'framing' my presence in the field, was an important first step towards understanding local perceptions (and consequent practices) of museum consumption and its cultural significance.

Once the initial contact was established I arranged to meet my 'informant-to-be' for an 'introductory' session, which usually took place at the informant's home, thereby framing the meeting (along with any future meetings that would follow) within a more personal setting. The session incorporated what Bernard (1994) terms an 'unstructured, yet formal interview'. A mode of interviewing that, while based on a clear, pre-prepared, interview plan, emphasises minimal direction over responses, thereby allowing issues that the informant views as important and relevant to emerge. The core objectives of this preliminary interview were to ascertain basic information about the individual, their household, and their overall leisure practices, as well as generate a sense of ease that would encourage open dialogue.

Another important 'ingredient' of this introductory session was initiating the 'activities diary' (see Appendix 2) and establishing its procedure. Each informant was given a personal diary, covering a period of four to six weeks. They were then asked to fill in the details of the various activities they participated in during that time, stating what kind of activity took place and how they would define it (leisure / education / family / other); when and where the activity took place; who initiated it; who took part in the activity; how much they enjoyed it; and so on. I would then meet my informant, every month or so, at their home, in order to collect the diary (and deliver a new one), as well as discuss the reported events and activities. The diaries provided an insight into informants' leisure choices and familial routines, but, more importantly, they revealed what the informants *perceived* as a leisure choice. However, the diaries' most significant function was to generate an 'excuse' for regular, frequent meetings with my informants, which aimed to compensate, at least to some degree, for the obvious lack of an intense 'shared dwelling' experience that is common in more traditional ethnographic studies,

where the researcher lives among the people they wish to study. Conversing with my informants, especially within the physical and psychological contexts of their home, proved to be an extremely revealing and often rewarding fieldwork experience. These, increasingly informal, chats were a crucial factor in creating a sense of ease and trust, as well as maintaining an on-going, long-term relationship. The casual 'activities diary' meetings were supplemented by semi-structured, follow-up interviews (see Steinar, 1996) that asked specific, open-ended questions about perceptions and recollections of museum visits, as well as other leisure and education experiences. Particular emphasis was placed upon the 'consumption of the past', in terms of attitudes, practices and interest in history, heritage, and 'the past' in general. As with the visitors' survey format, some of Merriman's (1991) attitude-measuring questions that deal with museum and heritage visiting, as well as the public perception of 'the past', were integrated into the interview, in order to facilitate future comparisons. The interviews were also useful in establishing people's notions of locality, community and belonging, through ascertaining their perceptions of Croydon in general, and of their residential area within the borough in particular. Further issues of identity, origin and 'roots' emerged from recollections of specific childhood localities. The various follow-up interviews and discussions yielded a considerable amount of applicable information, with reference to the study's core themes. However, the most significant material emerged from the final method employed in studying the discourse of museum consumption - the life-history interview.

Towards the end of the fieldwork period I conducted a final, concluding session with my long-term informants. The session centred upon an extended life-history interview, which highlighted a variety of issues concerning the perception and appropriation of 'past', 'place' and 'museums'. Some of these issues had been raised in earlier interviews and informal conversations, which took place eighteen to twenty four months prior to the concluding session. Incorporating 'previously asked' questions enabled comparisons between different responses given by the same informant, to the same issues, under different circumstances, and over an extended period of time. The amicable atmosphere in which these life-history sessions were conducted (following two years of on-going contact) along with the familiar topics of discussion, and perhaps the life-story narration itself, seemed to put my informants at ease, consequently allowing them to voice (for the first time in some cases) private viewpoints and attitudes, regardless of their social and cultural 'correctness'

In order to generate this accommodating ambience and facilitate an otherwise complex practice each informant was given an outline of the 'final interview and life-history review' (see Appendix 3) along with a covering letter, explaining the interview's purpose and procedure, prior to the set meeting. This allowed both contemplation and preparation, which were necessary in this case, seeing that the informants were asked to present photographs and any other relevant materials they could gather to accompany their life-story narration.

Conducting the interview within the context of the home further enhanced the connections between certain objects (such as souvenirs, works of art, specific items of furniture, and even the décor itself) and certain past events. Acknowledging these links, and photographically documenting their material manifestations, enabled a study of both the notion of 'domestic as museum' (see Chevalier, 1996) and the materiality of memories and 'the past'. The contextual data emerging from these comprehensive sessions provided an important insight into the key life-experiences, which played a vital role in forming my informants' current lifestyles, perceptions and practices.

A total of thirty-three long-term informants (fifteen 'staff' and eighteen 'visitors') were interviewed throughout the fieldwork period. Using the same format of 'activities diary', follow-up interviews and life-history sessions for both 'informant groups' enabled crucial comparisons between perceptions and attitudes voiced by various 'staff' informants and those voiced by different 'visitor' informants.

Most of the interviews and all of the life-history sessions were recorded on tape. I found that tape-recording the interview actually created a less formal environment, as it eliminated the preoccupation with taking notes whilst interviewing. This enabled me to make eye contact, observe and respond to body language, facial expressions, mood and tone of voice and so on, thereby generating a more relaxed, conversation-like atmosphere. The practice of tape-recording interviews also produced a full and exact record of what was said and in what way it was said. This then enabled an in-depth 'content analysis' of the conversation, in narrative-research terms (cf. Gullestad, 1996; and Lieblich, 1997, 1998), highlighting people's choice of wording, alongside their attitudes, revelations and reservations, or in other words, the issues they expanded upon and the issues they avoided.

Detailed notes, taken immediately after the meeting, regarding the setting and context of the interview (where and when it took place, who was present, and so on) alongside comments on the ambience of the conversation and its observed nuances, were then added to the taped material (and any accompanying photographic documentation) in order to create as full a record as possible, thereby facilitating the analysis. An additional objective of this practice was to minimise the risk of taking evidence for granted (see Herzfeld, 1987), which is especially crucial in ethnographic studies of familiar settings.

The greatest advantage of tape-recording seemed to be its greatest disadvantage as well, seeing that the abundance and richness of data emerging from this practice led to endless hours of transcribing, sorting and categorising an overwhelming amount of material. Although these activities proved extremely instrumental in locating and establishing the various themes of the 'thesis-to-be', they were also extremely taxing and time consuming.

Adhering to the code of ethics and the data protection act (see Spradley, 1980; Ellen, 1984; and Wolcott, 1995) tape-recording and photographing, as well as the consequent use of recorded and photographed materials, were always done with my informants full awareness and, often written, permission (see Appendix 4), regardless of the means and circumstances in which the material was collected, be it through conversation, observation, or participation.

Studying Practice

I began my exploration of museum-consumption practice, by conducting a comprehensive course of visitor observation sessions for the Croydon museum service. The principal objectives were to produce a detailed visitor profile, alongside a visitor-dynamics analysis, thereby establishing people's practices of visiting the *Clocktower* centre in general, and the *Lifetimes* museum in particular. The visitor observation sessions were conducted over a period of twelve non-consecutive months (November 1997 to August 1998 inclusive; and October 1998 to December 1998 inclusive), and took place in three principal locations - the *Clocktower* centre's main entrance court; the *Lifetimes* museum's entrance area; and, most importantly, the *Lifetimes* gallery itself.

The sessions combined systematic 'Space Syntax' techniques (which are part of a unique approach to Social Spatial Analysis that was developed by the Space Syntax Laboratory, at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL) with traditional 'fly-on-the-wall' style observations. The latter involved straightforward recording of visitors' essential characteristics and general 'code of conduct'. Special emphasis was placed upon visitor behaviour patterns, as well as observed reactions and interaction, manifested in body language, facial expressions and overheard conversations. The various 'Space Syntax' techniques complemented the traditional observations by providing a means for producing a statistical breakdown of the visitor profile, as well as an instrumental process of ascertaining specific visitor practices in terms of movement patterns, as well as observed preferences and attention spans.

Visitor observations in the first location - the *Clocktower* centre's main entrance court - included two principal 'Space Syntax' techniques: the 'Gate' count and the 'Split' observation count. The 'Gate' method was originally developed for recording observations of moving people or vehicles. It is typically used in urban situations, but can be applied to interior spaces as well. The procedure is as follows - the researcher stands at a selected 'Gate' position and draws an imaginary line crossing the observed space. People crossing this line are then counted, over a set period of time. "Observations should be recorded on a prepared table [including] a number of different categories [as well as the relevant] day and time" (Vaughan, et al, 1997: 1-4).

Adapting this method to record the visitor observations conducted at the centre's main court entailed a similar procedure. The 'imaginary line' was placed across the main entrance doors, which lead from the box office hall to the court area. Visitors who crossed this 'imaginary line' during the observation time were included in the 'Gate' count.

The categories chosen for the observation tables (see '*Clocktower* Observation Form' in Appendix 5) reflect Croydon Council's emphasis on equality terms. However, it is imperative to consider that visitors were not approached during this portion of the study. Consequently, visitors' estimated age group, ethnic group and ability / disability categories were based solely upon appearances. The visitors' estimated ethnic groups were particularly difficult to ascertain, limiting the overall ethnic breakdown to the three, crude, census-appointed categories of - Asian / Black / White.

The 'Gate' count was combined with a 'Split' observation method, which is similarly "suitable for recording observations of moving people... The aim is to record the split of a movement flow at a junction. The method involves taking a plan of the junction and working out all of the possible directions in which the movement may split. These should be labelled... A person or vehicle should be chosen at random from those approaching the junction and followed until it is obvious which of the possible destinations they are headed for. In some situations it might be possible to select a single observation point from which the approach to the junction is visible, as well as all of the possible destination points. In such a situation it is possible to carry out the observations whilst being stationary" (ibid.: 7-8). As both observation methods were concurrently employed the selected 'observation point' and the 'Gate' position were located at the same place, the centre's court area, in front of the main entrance doors and box office hall. Standing with my back to the library and facing the centre's main entrance, enabled a clear view of the chosen 'imaginary line', as well as the 'junction' and all of the possible 'destination points' (see Appendix 5). Since the combined 'Gate' and 'Split' observation methods were conducted simultaneously, the procedure was slightly modified as well [9]. Each 'Space Syntax' observation session lasted for twenty minutes. During that time a 'Gate' count of the first twenty people to cross the 'imaginary line' was conducted. The same twenty people were 'followed through the junction', recording their choice of 'destination' within the *Clocktower's* complex.

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[9] *This kind of adaptation is quite common in Space Syntax studies of relatively quiet locations (see Vaughan, 2000)*

The intention was to conduct the four monthly *Clocktower* centre's observation sessions during the peak visiting days (namely Saturdays) and off peak visiting days (namely Mondays), as well as its peak visiting times (late afternoons) and off peak visiting times (late mornings). A fixed timetable was therefore scheduled to include one weekday of observations (Monday) and one weekend day of observations (Saturday) every month. Each of the observation days was then set to incorporate one, twenty minute-long, late morning observation-session (between 11:30 and 11:50), entailing the combined 'Gate' and 'Split' methods; and one, twenty minute-long, late afternoon observation-session (between 16:30 and 16:50), entailing the combined 'Gate' and 'Split' methods. Consequently, all of the main court observations took place over the same set period of time, at the same set location, on the same set days of the week, and the same set times of the day, observing a random group of visitors, who entered the centre during the observation-session time.

A total of fifty 'rounds' of visitor observation sessions were conducted at the *Clocktower* centre's main entrance court, following a thousand visitors over a twelve and a half month period (including the pilot study run, which took place in September 1997).

Observations in the second location, *Lifetimes'* entrance area, were quite similar to those conducted at the centre's entrance court, inasmuch as they employed a similar 'Gate' count routine, aimed at establishing an overall visitor profile that would complement the museum's annual survey data. Once again, an 'imaginary line' was positioned, this time across the museum's entrance. Visitors who crossed this 'threshold' during the, strictly scheduled, observation time were included in the 'Gate' count. The same 'equality terms' categories were used for the museum's observation tables as well (see '*Lifetimes* Visitor Profile Form' in Appendix 5). In all, one thousand visitor 'Gate' counts were conducted at the *Lifetimes* museum's entrance area, during the consecutive months of November and December 1998.

The principal, and most productive visitor observation sessions took place within the third location - the *Lifetimes* museum itself. These comprehensive sessions incorporated traditional methods, alongside two core 'Space Syntax' techniques: the principal 'Gate' count and the 'Snail Trail' observation method.

The 'Snail Trail' observation method was designed to record the "precise route taken by people moving through a certain space... The observer stands for a set time and records all of the movement through the space observed, tracing with a pen the precise route taken and showing with an arrow the last point at which the observed person was seen" (Vaughan, et al, 1997: 6).

A special, *Lifetimes* observation form (see Appendix 5) was devised in order to carry out these procedures. First, exact measurements of the museum's exhibition area and its various displays were taken. Then, an accurate map of the museum's layout was drawn, marking each of its display spaces [see Figure 1.5]. The detailed map and guiding charts were then used to record a variety of visitor-observation materials, from straightforward data such as the date, day and time of the observed visit, as well as how crowded the museum was during that time, to the number of visitors in the observed visitor-group, along with their observed visitor profile characteristics. Each session centred upon one individual visitor, from one selected visitor group, recording their visit from the moment they entered *Lifetimes* to the moment they left (although in some cases visitors were followed, discreetly, into the souvenir shop as well, so to include the 'acquisition' element of their experience and ascertain its significance).

Using one museum observation form per visitor, per visit, a detailed record was produced, highlighting the visitor's preferences and measured attention span, in terms of the overall length of the visit and the time spent at each display, including the various information panels and touch screen interactive units, text and photo files, and so on. The visitor's interactions during each stage of their visit were also recorded, alongside their actions and observed reactions to each display. The 'Snail Trail' method was simultaneously employed in order to track and record the visitor's 'museum route' around the gallery.

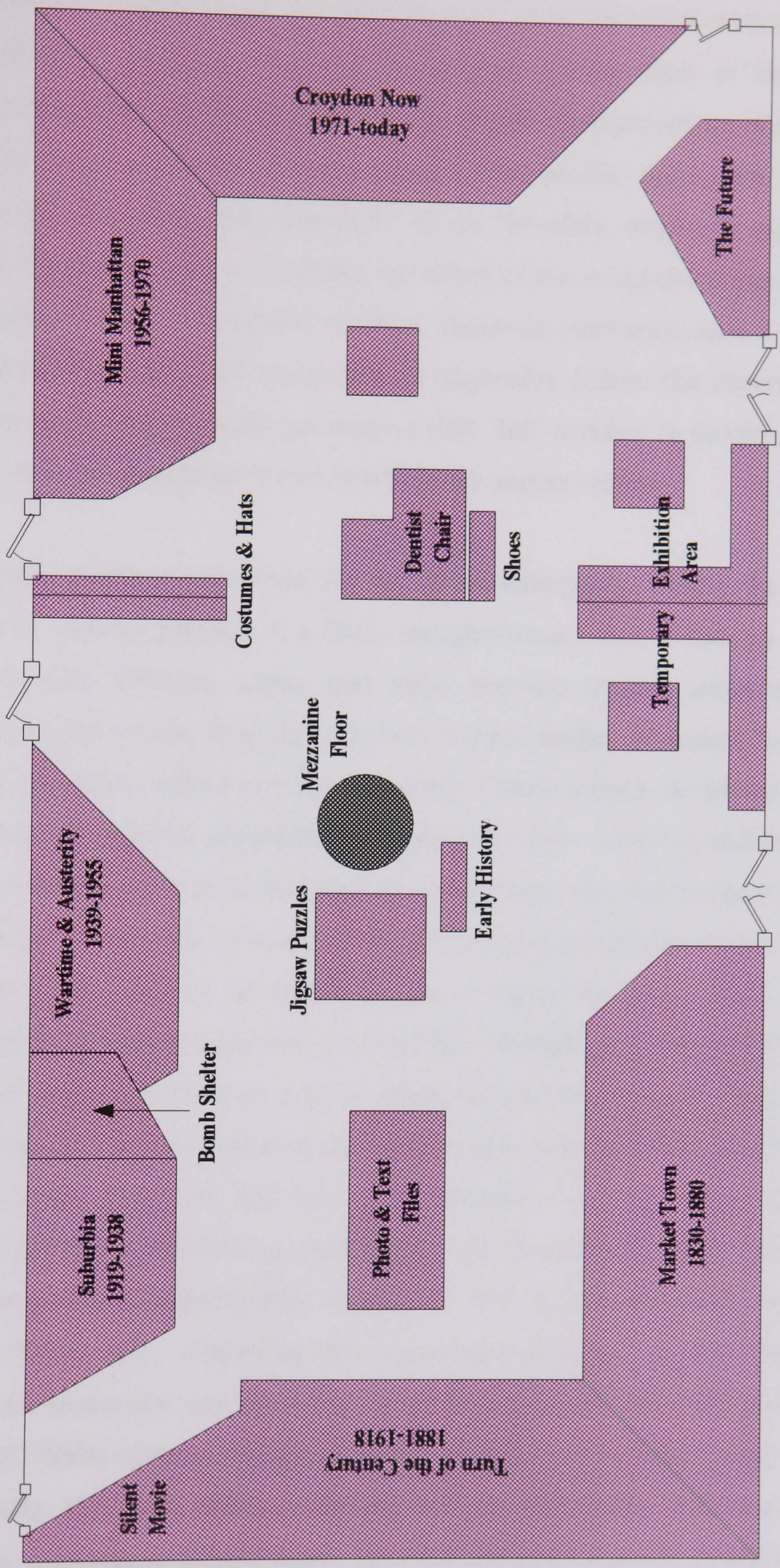

Figure 1.5: *Lifetimes* – Museum Layout

All of the visitor observation sessions that took place at the *Lifetimes* museum were carried out from the same chosen 'observation point' (near the spiral staircase, between the museum's two exhibition areas), as it provided a clear view of the museum's exhibition space, consequently enabling an almost stationary procedure of observation. This also served as a means of maintaining a 'low profile' during the observation session, thereby following the principals of an 'invisible observer' approach (see Bernard, 1994), which aims to minimise the effect of the researcher's presence on the observed individual and their general conduct. However, employing such a method had its disadvantages as well. Not being able to physically follow the observed visitors round the museum meant I could not observe their 'full' reaction to certain elements of the display, such as the popular World War II bomb shelter replica.

Another related problem concerned the 'art of eavesdropping'. While the systematic observation of visitors' practice is a fairly straightforward task, following their exact discourse is quite difficult, seeing that adult museum visitors often converse in noticeably lowered voices, if at all. The new visitor studies presented in Leinhardt, Crowley & Knutson's edited volume *'Learning Conversations In Museums'* (2002) overcame this challenge by physically accompanying their visitors round the museum, and openly recording (as well as initiating and prompting from time to time) the visitors' dialogue. Heath & Vom Lehn's recent research (2002) of social interaction in museums, galleries and science centres, advocates the use of video-recording, which enables the collection (and subsequent analysis) of extremely detailed records, showing visitors' physical and verbal reactions, as well as interactions during a group visit. However, drawing upon information collected by such means can be highly problematic. If visitors are made aware of, and give their consent to being video recorded the researcher's presence and obvious equipment, will undoubtedly affect the observed individual, or group, influencing their conduct, as well as their discourse, reactions and interactions. Conversely, concealing the recording equipment, so that the observed visitors are not aware that they are being recorded is not only extremely unethical, but also unlawful. While tape-recording and photographing were certainly employed in the presented study, they were always practised with my informants' full awareness and, often written, permission. What's more, recorded materials (usually in the form of an interview, conducted at the informant's home) were typically collected after an extended period of established contact, and not during the initial stages of visitor observation.

Eight visitor observation sessions were conducted at the *Lifetimes* museum each month, incorporating the museum's peak visiting day (Saturday) and off peak visiting day (Monday), as well as peak visiting times (early afternoons) and off peak visiting times (late afternoons). As the time span of each observation session could vary considerably, according to the individual length of the observed visit, a goal of conducting one observation per hour was set. The fixed timetable consequently included one weekday of observations (Monday) and one weekend day of observations (Saturday) per month. These targeted, observations-days were then set to incorporate two, early afternoon, visitor observation sessions (between 12:00 noon and 14:00) followed by two, late afternoon, observation sessions (between 14:00 and 16:00). As with the *Clocktower* observation session, all of the *Lifetimes* observations took place over the same set period of time, at the same set location, on the same set days of the week, and the same set times of the day.

In all, one hundred 'rounds' of visitor observation sessions were conducted at the *Lifetimes* museum, following one hundred individual visitors over a twelve and a half month period (including the pilot study run, which was conducted in September 1997). The observed visitors were chosen from a random group of people who entered the museum during the observation time. Special care was taken to ensure that the sample, small as it may be, would be representative of the museum's existing visitor profile.

According to the museum's 1997 'Annual Visitor Survey' - 56% of the visitors to *Lifetimes* were female and 44% were male; 14% of the visitors were over sixty years old and 17% were under sixteen years old; 20% of the visitors to *Lifetimes* were from ethnic minority groups; 4% were disabled (Pattison, 1998: 9-17). Correspondingly, the study's sample, included one hundred visitors of whom - fifty-six were female; and forty-four were male; Fourteen were estimated as being over sixty years old, and seventeen were estimated as being under sixteen years old; twenty of the observed visitors were estimated as being of ethnic minority groups. The only 'equality figure' the sample failed to match was the number of disabled visitors, as only one disabled visitor was observed.

Another visitor profile characteristic, which must be acknowledged, is the fact that 46% of the visitors to *Lifetimes* are pre-booked KS2 school groups, which are comprised of pupils between the ages of seven and eleven, as well as special-need groups (ibid.: 3) and yet none of these groups were included in this sample. This is due to the nature of

the systematic observation component employed in this study, which was designed to locate and record the particular museum-practices of *individual* visitors. Group visits were therefore analysed separately and with greater depth, considering their central role and special significance to the overall experience of museum consumption.

Studying The Experience

"Looking back, I can still feel the tremor of excitement I felt on first being permitted to go 'back-stage' with my own key to use doors - half-hidden by displays - at the back of galleries leading to what seemed initially like a maze... The world which I was exploring as an Ethnographer was quite literally divided into 'back stage' and 'front stage' (Goffman 1971), and part of my task was to chart the traffic across that security-warden marked boundary between a most public of front stages and professionally exclusive of back stages..."

(Macdonald, 2002a: 117)

Macdonald's sentiments seamlessly echo my own fieldwork experience of exploring museum culture, from the diverse perspectives of both its producers and its consumers. An insight into the producers' perspective was gained by attending weekly staff meetings and gallery assistants' briefings, as well as sharing an office with the museum's education officer. The latter enabled me to observe and participate (to a certain degree) in the daily routines and procedures of producing and maintaining the museum's exhibitions, as well as organising and carrying out special events, workshops and group visits. Regular field notes documented the routine activities and events that I observed and participated in, along with occasional photographs, and a collection of secondary data in the form of leaflets, brochures and newsletters, as well as other promotional and educational materials aimed at 'the consumer'.

In studying the consumers' experience special emphasis was placed upon examining the perceptions and practices of specific visitor groups. School groups were of particular interest, as they form the largest and most common category of museum visiting. However, I was also interested in studying, and voicing another, very distinctive group, who rarely visits *Lifetimes*, although they were the main driving force behind the public campaign for its establishment - the local history societies.

My first successful attempt to contact key figures in this group was achieved by gaining an invitation to attend a 'Local Studies Forum' meeting, which took place at the local studies section of the *Clocktower's* central library. The 'Local Studies Forum' was established in 1992 by the leading member bodies of Croydon's local societies, in order to discuss matters of common interest and co-ordinate their activities (*Croydon Local Studies Forum Leaflet*, Issue Number One, February 1997). Gaining access to this meeting provided an opportunity to introduce myself, as well as my research to the key representatives of Croydon's local societies, with the hope of persuading them to take part in the study. This however, was not as simple a task as it initially seemed. Several members of the 'forum', who are bitterly disappointed with the outcome of their prolonged museum campaign, were unable to divorce my study from what they perceived, disapprovingly, as an association with *Lifetimes*, and were consequently very uncooperative. Fortunately, other 'forum' members were more amicable and obliging. Their input and participation enabled me to examine, and voice a distinctive group, from a different background than that of my other 'visitor' informants.

Exploring the school group's museum experience was a more straightforward process, although it too required careful planning beforehand. Employing Falk and Dierking's (1992) fundamental concept of interaction between the personal, social and physical contexts of museum visiting, the school group's museum experience was examined in terms of: expectations and preparations prior to the museum visit; reactions and interactions during the visit; and the overall impression and internalisation of the experience, by its various participants, after the visit. Particular emphasis was placed upon the classroom practices that preceded, and followed, the school group's museum excursion, in terms of both didactic activities and 'civilising rituals'. Teachers' attitudes towards museum visiting and their consequent influence as a positive, or negative catalyst to the museum experience were also considered.

In order to incorporate these diverse, time-dependent contexts and examine the experience from the various perspectives of staff, teachers, parents and adult-helpers, as well as the children themselves, long-term contacts with classes from purposely-chosen schools had to be established. The Museum's 'Teachers' Evening' events proved instrumental in that effect, as they enabled me to contact, and later interview, a variety of teachers from a wide range of Croydon schools.

Two *primary* schools were then chosen for the long-term study since the majority of school visits to *Lifetimes* and other local museums were from primary rather than secondary schools, and in particular from the KS2 group (school years three to six, which are comprised of pupils between the ages of seven and eleven). The selected schools were purposely chosen from two distinct localities within the Croydon borough.

The first location was a relatively affluent, leafy suburb in South Croydon. Most of the pupils that attended the local school at the time of the study came from the nearby neighbourhoods, which consist predominantly of middle-class families who define themselves as being White, and (usually) of native English descent. The informal atmosphere in this small, community school was warm and welcoming, seeing that most of its two hundred pupils, along with the majority of its staff, were either neighbours, or, in several cases, family members.

The second location was a far less affluent, urban area in North Croydon. As with the South Croydon school, most of the pupils at the time of the study came from nearby neighbourhoods, which consist predominantly of lower-class families who define themselves as being of African-Caribbean, Southeast Asian, or native-Irish descent. The atmosphere in this large school was extremely formal and disciplinary, perhaps because of its immense size and relatively rough location. Exploring the museum experiences of teachers, parents and children in these two, very different, schools generated compelling comparisons.

Over the course of the next eighteen months, I became a regular visitor at the two schools, attending weekly assembly presentations and history lessons, as well as any and all activities that were related to museum visits. The curriculum obligation observed by both schools at the time, was to include at least one museum visit per term. This ensured an opportunity to accompany, as an adult-helper, each one of my classes on two separate museum-visiting occasions, which typically included a visit to *Lifetimes* together with a visit to one other, often local (or at least physically near-by) museum. This enabled me to compare and contrast different school visits to different museums, in addition to the comparisons between the school groups themselves, especially in regard to the two, observed *Lifetimes* museum visits.

An added bonus of observing and participating in various 'school activities' was the long-term contacts I established with teachers and, more importantly, with parents (usually mothers) who took part in the biannual school excursions to different museums. Some of these mothers, who often volunteered as 'reading assistants' and 'dinner ladies' at the school as well, became an important part of my 'visitor' informant group, in addition to those contacted directly at the *Lifetimes* museum. Studying this fundamental manifestation of museum consumption, within a wide context, proved extremely fruitful in terms of the overall analysis, as it established the role museums play in current education practices, thereby examining their contribution to the indoctrination of knowledge, the cultivation of conduct and the acquisition of social and cultural skills.

In addressing the role museums play in contemporary leisure practices, the intention was to compare my informants' observed visit to the *Lifetimes* museum (be it with a school, or privately, with friends or family) with other museum visits and related leisure activities, which I expected to observe and participate in. All of my 'visitor' informants had declared during our 'introductory' session that they visit museums 'at least three to six times a year'. However, in the course of this extended fieldwork period only one family, out of eighteen 'visitor' households, privately visited a museum, once. Disappointingly, the 'rate' of museum visiting, beyond the work-related occasions, wasn't much more promising among my 'staff' informants either.

This was an unexpected, and even 'ironic' result, seeing that one of the initial concerns was to incorporate 'non-visitor' informants into the selected 'target groups' of the study, by means of a 'street survey' (following Miller's concept of 'street ethnography', 1997) along with social networking analysis, as demonstrated by Sandra Wallman's (1984) community studies approach.

It soon became evident that the only museum visits my informants participated in were of the 'work or school related' variety, inasmuch as they were initiated and organised by the informant's workplace or their children's school. The study was inadvertently becoming an exploration of non-consumption, rather than consumption, at least in terms of leisure practices and preferences. This, in itself, provided an interesting and significant insight into the studied phenomenon.

Conclusion

Combining a variety of complementary research methods was undeniably helpful in generating a more comprehensive source of data and experience from which to construct this thesis. The complexity of implementing and co-ordinating the various elements of this multi-layered study was rewarded by the remarkable abundance, diversity and richness of the data. While the systematic observations and 'Space Syntax' techniques provided effective means for describing the phenomenon in term of its observed practices, the visitor survey and various informant interviews proved constructive in documenting its voiced discourses.

Employing participant observation as the principal, underlining strategy of this study proved exceptionally valuable, as it enabled me to combine and compare discourse with practice, thereby providing means for generating an in-depth, explanatory analysis of the studied phenomenon.

Apart from integrating objective observation and subjective participation by simply 'being there and taking part', a significant amount of time was spent in conversation, and especially in informal conversation. This 'casual' fieldwork component cannot be quantified, yet it plays a crucial part in gaining a sense of informants' experience, which is essential for producing an analytical, ethnographic account.

The process of - 'writing ethnography' (see Marcus & Clifford, 1986; Van Maanen, 1988; Wolcott, 1995, and 1999) is, in many ways, the exact opposite to that of - 'doing ethnography'. While the latter accentuates empathy, exploration and expansion, the former advocates a mental (and often physical) distancing from the field (in order to regain a more detached, impartial point of view), as well as a narrowing and focusing of the fieldwork experience into its core analytical themes. The following thesis sections correspondingly present the key findings that emerge from the integrated methodology, and the consequent, overall analysis of the museum consumption phenomenon, alongside its cultural implications and significance.

Section Two

The Lifetimes Experience

Introduction

"There was a time when museums were sedate havens of antiquity. Dust settled on glass cases and visitors tiptoed about in hushed reverence. Then came Croydon Clocktower"

('Croydon Advertiser' - Quoted in: Croydon Clocktower - Events & Exhibitions Pamphlet, 2000)

The *Clocktower* centre has a compelling impact on its first-time viewers: from its picturesque Victorian exterior (which seems all the more striking among central Croydon's austere, grey, 1960s style architecture) to the scale and design of its grand interior. The entrance hall's white-marble, temple-like columns and trendy glass-ceiling, which elegantly join the restored Victorian building with its contemporary counterpart, often leave first-time visitors in awe.

Although it offers an equally surprising experience, the modestly scaled *Lifetimes* gallery is in complete contrast to the *Clocktower* centre that houses it, inasmuch as it is neither imposing, nor by any means temple-like. In fact, *Lifetimes* is not entirely 'museum-like', at least not in the conventional, authoritative nuance that is often associated with museums by their public (cf. Fisher, 1990a, 1990b; Trevelyan, 1991; Merriman, 1991, 2000; and Bennett, 1995).

I can still vividly recall my first experience of Croydon's new local history museum. The initial qualities I noticed as I walked into the gallery for the first time were largely sensual in nature: a warm, soft glow of the lighting reflected in the pinewood floors, and a pleasant fragrance of flowers (which, as I later discovered, came from the 'Body Shop' display). The overall impression was one of warmth, the kind of welcoming sensation that is often sought after in contemporary museums, yet rarely achieved. But then, *Lifetimes* was unlike any other, conventional, local history museum that I had visited before. It did not *feel* like a conventional, local history museum, it did not *smell* like a conventional, local history museum, and it certainly did not *look* like a conventional, local history museum. Divided into six principal presentation areas, the gallery space incorporates *Lifetimes*' six historical-period displays. Each section features a graphic panel, including a summary of the presented period and a detailed map of Croydon during that time; a touch-screen interactive unit; and a slightly elevated, stage-like platform, upon which an array of period objects are displayed [see Figures 2.1 - 2.4]

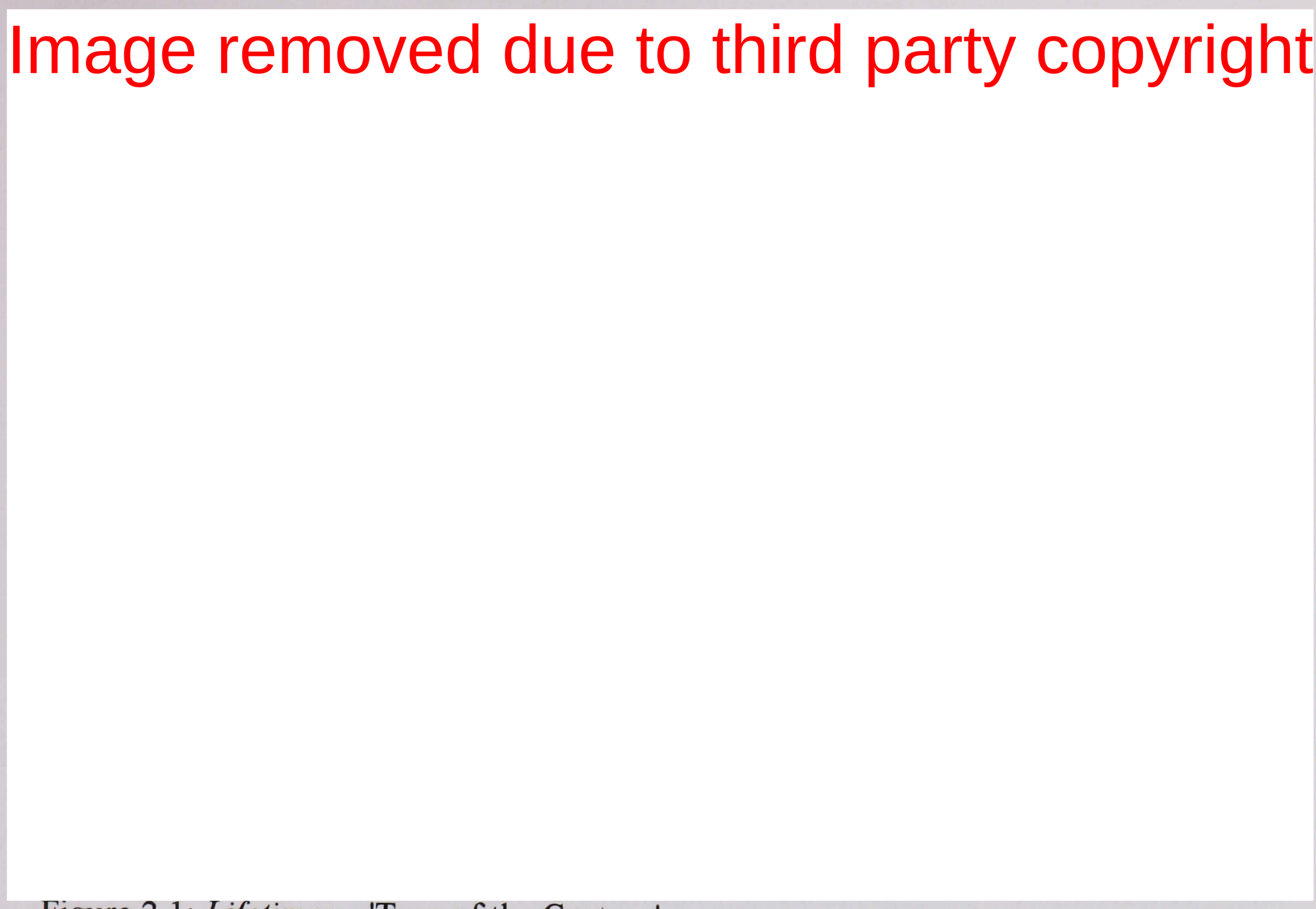

Figure 2.1: *Lifetimes* – 'Turn of the Century'

[Croydon Museum Service Archive Photo - Presented with kind permission of the Lifetimes Museum]

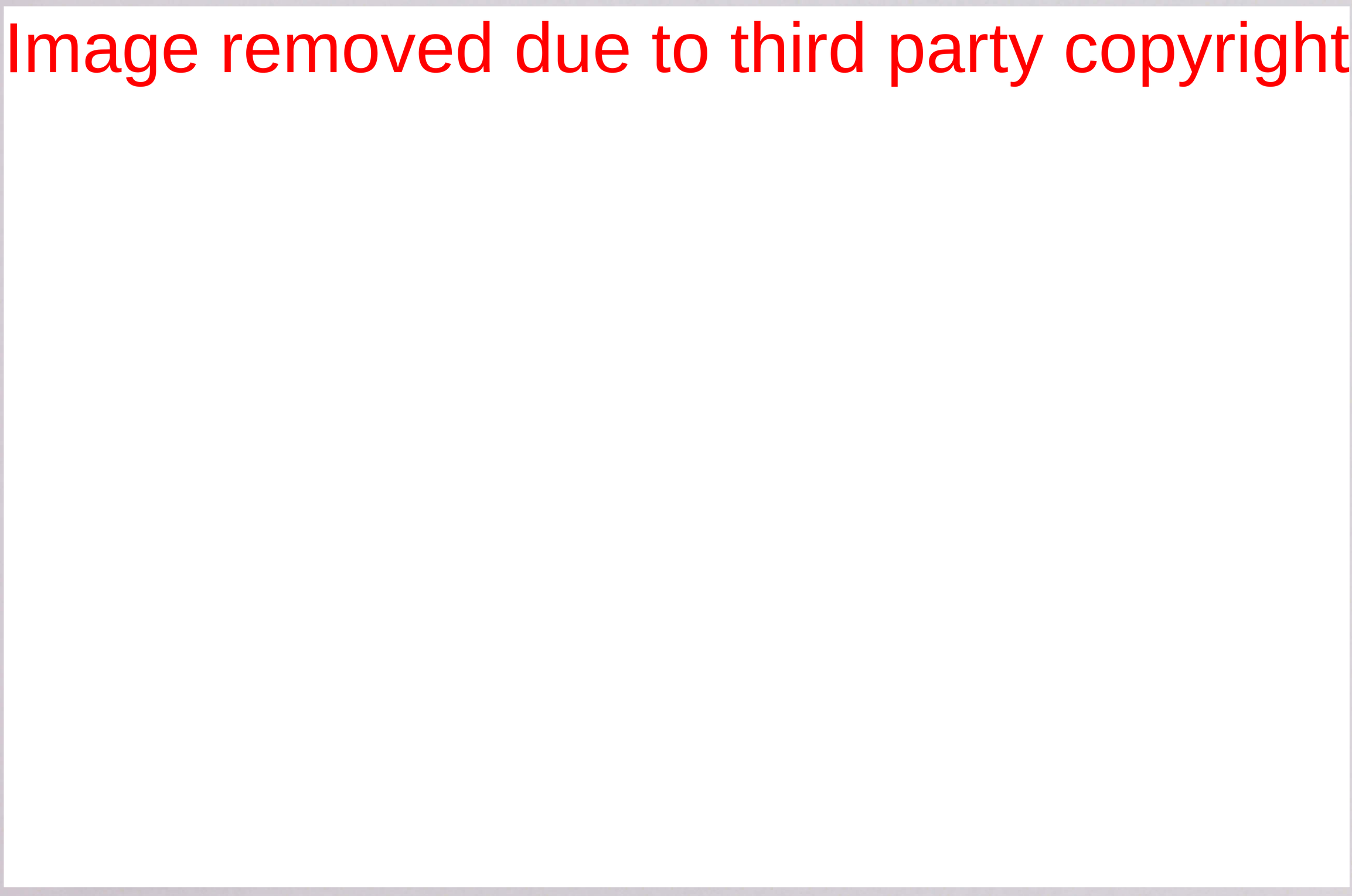

Figure 2.2: *Lifetimes* – 'Wartime & Austerity' and the 'Anderson Shelter'

[Croydon Museum Service Archive Photo - Presented with kind permission of the Lifetimes Museum]

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 2.3: *Lifetimes* - 'Wartime & Austerity' and the 'Dress Up' Corner

[Croydon Museum Service Archive Photo - Presented with kind permission of the Lifetimes Museum]

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 2.4: *Lifetimes* – 'Mini Manhattan' and the 'Bubble Car'

[Croydon Museum Service Archive Photo - Presented with kind permission of the Lifetimes Museum]

The period objects include clothing and accessories, everyday household utilities, furniture and ornaments, toys and games, collectibles, specialist tools, shop interiors, along with a 'Bubble Car' and other oddities, such as a dentist's chair and a stuffed calf. The bizarre juxtaposition of these objects gives the impression of a theatre's backstage storage-room, packed-full of period sets, costumes and props. While each object on its own looks familiar, the overall arrangement seems quite incongruous, and consequently somewhat ambiguous, more like a surreal 'house-clearance sale' than a conventional local history presentation, at least at the outset.

Another distinctly unique feature of *Lifetimes* is the lack of traditional museum boundaries. There are hardly any glass cases, nor any 'restrictive signs'. The low, almost playful, red bars along the bottom edge of each display mean that visitors can stand in an unusually close proximity to the exhibitions and even touch some of the objects at the front of the display.

Like many of my (future) young-adult informants I found the touch-screen interactive units to be quite 'user-friendly', allowing easy access to the various multimedia presentations, which include: indexed information on each of the displayed objects (in terms of their make, function and 'biography'); an animated knowledge quiz; and a series of brief audio-visual documentaries; The latter feature the vocal testimonies of local residents accompanied by photographs, or film, which ground the exhibits in a social history context. The presentation emphasises local people's perspectives and personal experiences of various historical events, alongside everyday life-stories, thereby transforming the museum's local history display into a local 'his-story' display, and highlighting the pluralistic principle of 'no one history'.

As a postgraduate student, familiar with the principles of the 'New Museology' movement, which the *Lifetimes*' display clearly exemplifies, I found the museum's Postmodern, non-authoritative approach refreshing, intriguing and thought-provoking. And yet, I could not help but wonder how other visitors perceive and experience this avant-garde presentation.

The primary purpose of this section is to explore and analyse local people's experience of the *Lifetimes* museum, from the wide-ranging perspectives of its diverse 'viewers'. The term 'viewers' (rather than visitors) is intentionally employed throughout this section in order to incorporate the different 'points of view' of all those who view and review the *Lifetimes* museum, including visitors and non-visitors, as well as staff members.

The presentation therefore integrates and correlates the core findings that emerge from the combined - quantitative and qualitative - fieldwork methodologies, highlighting the underlying questions that arise from this multifaceted data. Consequently, the section acts as a transitional link between the methodological framework discussed in section one, and the principal analysis presented in sections three, four and five.

The first core-module - *Tracking The Viewers* [1] - centres upon the quantitative component of the study, highlighting the museum's visitor profile and viewer dynamics in terms of observed practices and preferences. The account addresses a range of themes from visitors' precise movement patterns around the museum space, to their physical reactions and interactions.

The second core-module - *Voicing The Viewers* [2] - centres upon the qualitative component of the study and its ethnographic attributes, highlighting the voiced perception and discourse regarding the *Lifetimes* museum, as expressed by its past 'visionaries' and its present 'viewers'. The analysis addresses people's impressions and overall perceptions of the museum (immediately following the visit, as well as over an extended period of contact), comparing the attitudes of different informants from the two principal 'informant groups' studied - the staff and the visitors.

Jointly, the two core-modules construct a detailed portrayal of the *Lifetimes* experience in terms of practice, perception and discourse.

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[1] *An earlier version of this material was presented to Croydon Museum Service as an internal paper - titled - 'Tracking The Visitors' (Hecht, 1999).*

[2] *An earlier version of this material was presented to Croydon Museum Service as an internal paper - titled - 'Voicing The Visitors' (Hecht, 2000).*

Tracking The Viewers

The following findings are an outcome of the systematic visitor observation methods and 'Space Syntax' techniques that were employed at the *Clocktower* centre and *Lifetimes* museum, during the study's initial fieldwork period [3]. As noted in the preceding methodological review (see section one) the principal objectives of this complex procedure were to produce a detailed visitor profile, alongside a visitor-dynamics analysis, thereby establishing people's practices of visiting the *Clocktower* centre in general, and the *Lifetimes* museum in particular.

Consequently, the first stage was designed to locate and record people's overall conduct and general use of the *Clocktower* facilities, in terms of movement patterns, body language and observed preferences. Fifty visitor observation sessions (see section one), were conducted at the main entrance court. These entailed following one thousand visitors over a twelve and a half month period. Considering the vast number of people using the centre's facilities (the library alone has over a million visitors a year) a sample of a thousand visitors may seem relatively small, yet, it is still representative, as it consists of randomly selected visitors, observed over a set period of time, at a set location. Furthermore, according to Vaughan (2000), this sample size gives a 95% level of certainty for a population of up to 1 million, with a 3% margin of error. Nevertheless, it is vital to consider that the presented data is based upon observation only and should therefore be regarded as an estimate, rather than an absolute presentation.

Visitor Profile

The Clocktower Centre

In terms of gender - the visitors' male / female distribution was practically even, seeing that 49.9% of the one thousand observed *Clocktower* visitors were male and 50.1 % were female. The difference between the morning and afternoon counts in this regard were insignificant (less than 0.5%). However, in terms of age group, the distributions were far more distinctive. As demonstrated in Data Chart 2.1, as well as Diagrams 2.1a, 2.1b and 2.1c, the majority of observed *Clocktower* visitors (41.7% of the males and 38.5% of the females) were young adults between the age of sixteen and twenty-nine.

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[3] The quoted data and presented analysis regarding visitors refer solely to visitors observed during the pilot study phase and the research period.

Data Chart 2.1: *Clocktower* Visitors' Profile

Gender and Age Group Distributions [Corresponding to Morning / Afternoon Counts]

Visitor Age Group	***0-15***	***16-29***	***30-44***	***45-59***	***60-74***	***75+***
Morning Count (Males)	6.1%	44.5%	20.2%	10.5%	16.2%	2.5%
Afternoon Count (Males)	14.7%	38.9%	21.0%	13.1%	9.1%	3.2%
Overall Count (Males)	10.4%	41.7%	20.7%	11.8%	12.6%	2.8%
Visitor Age Group	***0-15***	***16-29***	***30-44***	***45-59***	***60-74***	***75+***
Morning Count (Females)	13.0%	39.9%	16.2%	10.3%	17.4%	3.2%
Afternoon Count (Females)	25.8%	37.1%	19.7%	9.3%	7.3%	0.8%
Overall Count (Females)	19.4%	38.5%	17.9%	9.8%	12.4%	2.0%

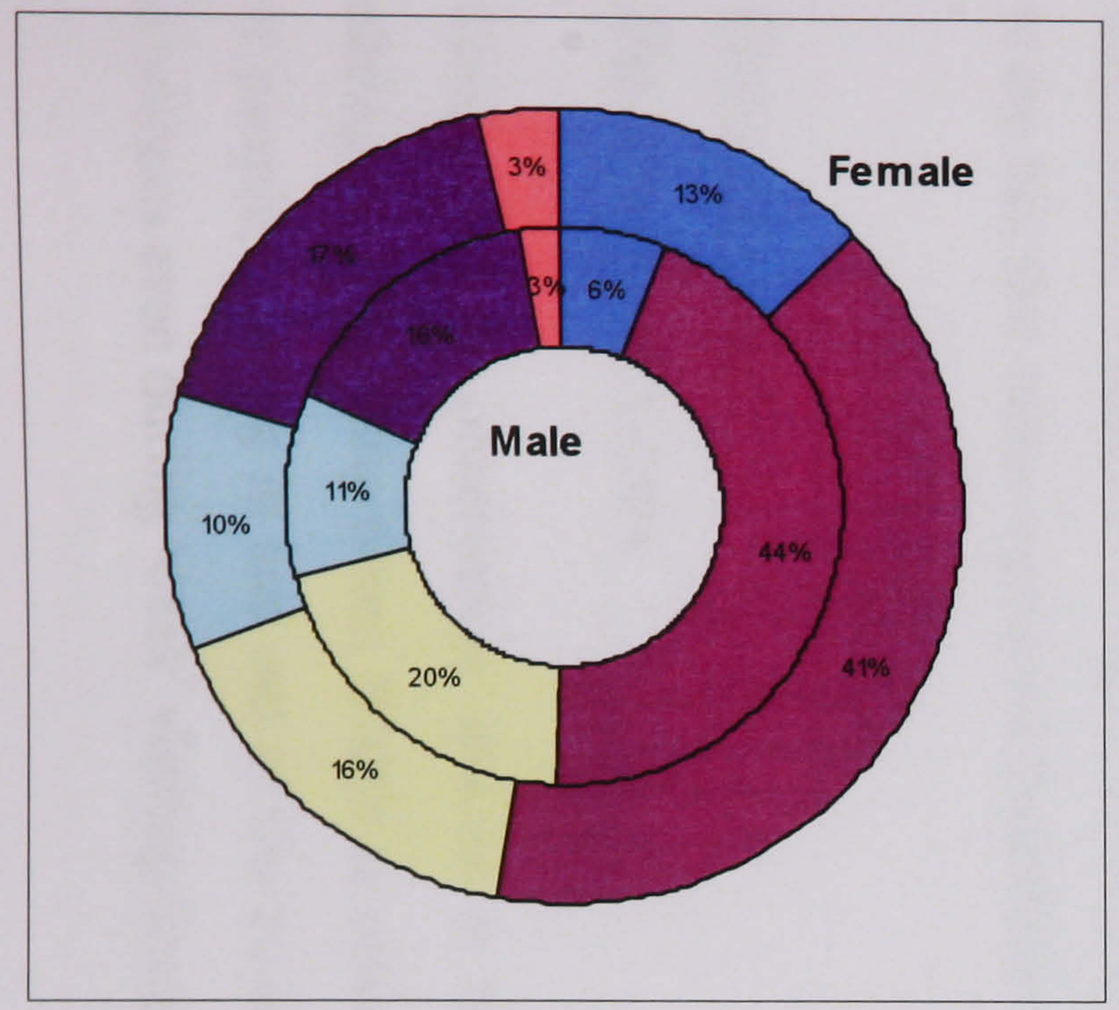

Diagram 2.1a:

Clocktower Visitors' Profile

Age Group Distributions

[Morning Count by Gender]

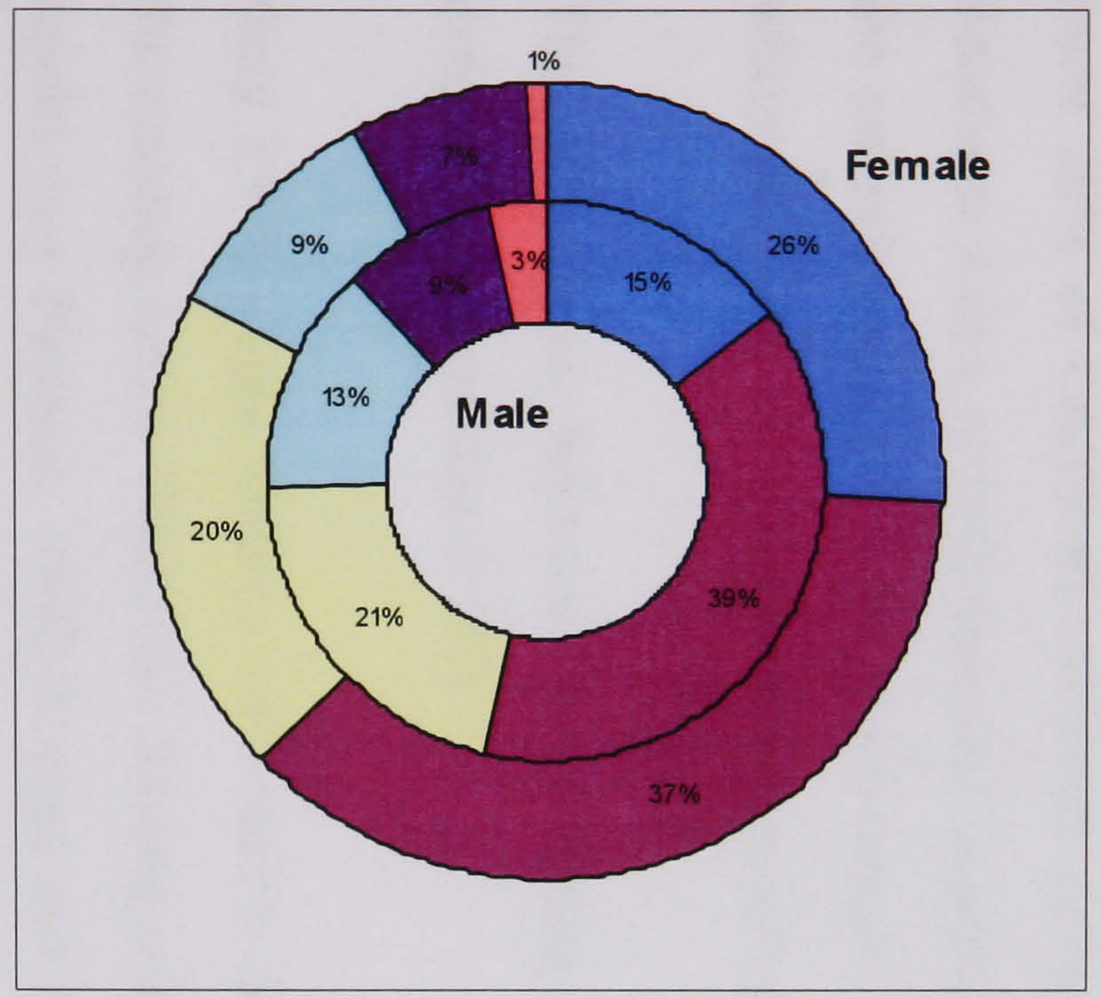

Diagram 2.1b:

Clocktower Visitors' Profile

Age Group Distributions

[Afternoon Count by Gender]

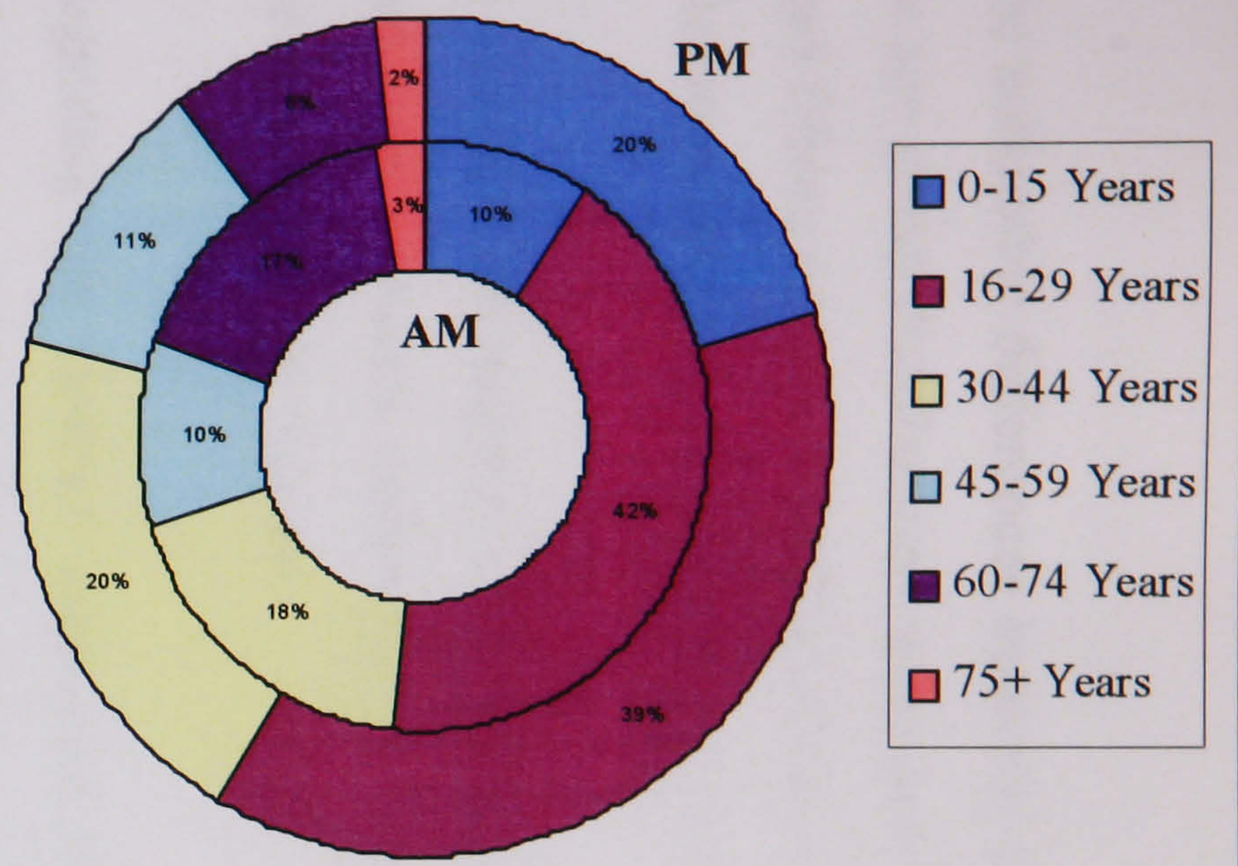

Diagram 2.1c:

Clocktower Visitors' Profile

Age Group Distributions

[Overall by Time of Day]

The noticeable differences between the morning and afternoon counts - with regard to the age group distribution - were quite predictable. The majority of the observed visitors aged fifteen or under (14.7% of the males and 25.8% of the females) came in during the afternoon hours, rather than the morning hours, corresponding to school hours.

In contrast, the majority of the observed visitors aged sixty or over came in during the mid-morning hours, rather than the afternoon hours. This was especially prominent with the elderly female visitors.

Regarding the visitors' *estimated* ethnic-group distribution - 13% of the observed *Clocktower* visitors appeared to be Asian, 22% appeared to be Black, and 65% appeared to be White. This does not correspond to the borough's overall ethnic-group distribution (over 20% of Croydon's residents define themselves as being of African-Caribbean, Southeast Asian, or Irish descent). A possible explanation for this discrepancy may lie in the centre's location within the borough, which is slightly closer to its 'northern half' - where the majority of these ethnic-origin groups reside.

The differences between the morning and afternoon counts in this regard were insignificant (less than 0.5%).

Only 3.9 % of the visitors were visibly disabled, the majority of whom came in during the morning hours. While this finding corresponds to *Lifetimes'* 'Annual Visitor Survey' results (see Pattison, 1998) it does not correlate with the borough's overall disability distribution, which has a higher percentage of disabled people. This finding may be due to the fact that some registered disabilities are not visibly identifiable.

Visitor Dynamics

The Clocktower Centre

Conducting an observation session at the *Clocktower* centre's main entrance court, during 'peak' visiting times, is akin to observing a busy beehive. There is an endless flow of people, pouring in and out of the building. This constant, overall movement-pattern continues even during 'weak' visiting times, though in a much softer, slower rhythm.

People's physical reaction upon entering the foyer, in kinetic terms (cf. Birdwhistell, 1971) of body language, facial expressions and general conduct, clearly indicates whether they are first-time visitors or frequent users. While the latter go, pragmatically, about their business, the former appear to be almost awe-struck by the imposing interior, as well as somewhat disoriented. The main court's architecture, with its grand open spaces and white-marble columns, is undeniably striking, yet, much like a great cathedral, it can also be intimidating. This seemed to be the case for most of the observed, first-time visitors, who appeared to be at a loss with the centre's complex layout and variety of services and attractions. By contrast, the regular users seemed almost indifferent to the interior. They seldom stopped to look at the foyer's elegant architecture, or gaze at the glass ceiling, as first-time users habitually did. Instead, they rushed on (usually in the same pace with which they entered the building) heading directly towards their pre-chosen 'destination' [4]. This seems to indicate that regular users come to the centre with a specific goal in mind. Their visits are consequently more of a purpose-oriented task than an incidental, aimless, leisure diversion.

The following charts and diagrams show the 'first destination' choice made by the visitors, thereby establishing the centre's most popular venues, or 'Hot Spots'. A few of the original destination points, which appear on the '*Clocktower* Observation Form' (see Appendix 5), were excluded from these statistical representations, for various reasons. The cafe' was not included because none of the observed visitors chose it as their first 'destination point'. Furthermore, the distinctions between the Riesco gallery and the temporary exhibition gallery, which are located, side by side, at the far end of the main court area, as well as the distinctions between the different destination venues on the court's upper level (including the *Lifetimes* museum, the David Lean Cinema, and the bar) were also disregarded, due to their close proximity and minor visitor numbers, compared with other *Clocktower* venues. The data concerning visitors' use of the *Lifetimes* touch-screen interactive-unit that was placed in the main foyer is also presented separately, as none of the observed visitors chose it as their first 'destination point'. No significant differences were observed between the preferences of visitors from different ethnic groups, or those who were visibly disabled, consequently, this part of the statistical analysis was excluded from the following data presentations.

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[4] *The only exception I saw to this pattern was during the Christmas season, when everyone's attention was drawn to the beautifully decorated Christmas tree in the main court.*

Data Chart 2.2: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Morning / Afternoon Distributions]

'Destination' / Counts	*A. Box Office*	*B. Library*	*C. Notice Board*	*D. Shop*	*E. Tourist Info.*	*F. Galleries*	*G. WC*	*H. Upper Level*
Morning	5.4%	87.8%	2.2%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	2.8%	0.2%
Afternoon	4.0%	86.6%	1.2%	2.2%	0%	0.2%	5.0%	0.8%
Overall	4.7%	87.2%	1.7%	1.4%	0.3%	0.3%	3.9%	0.5%

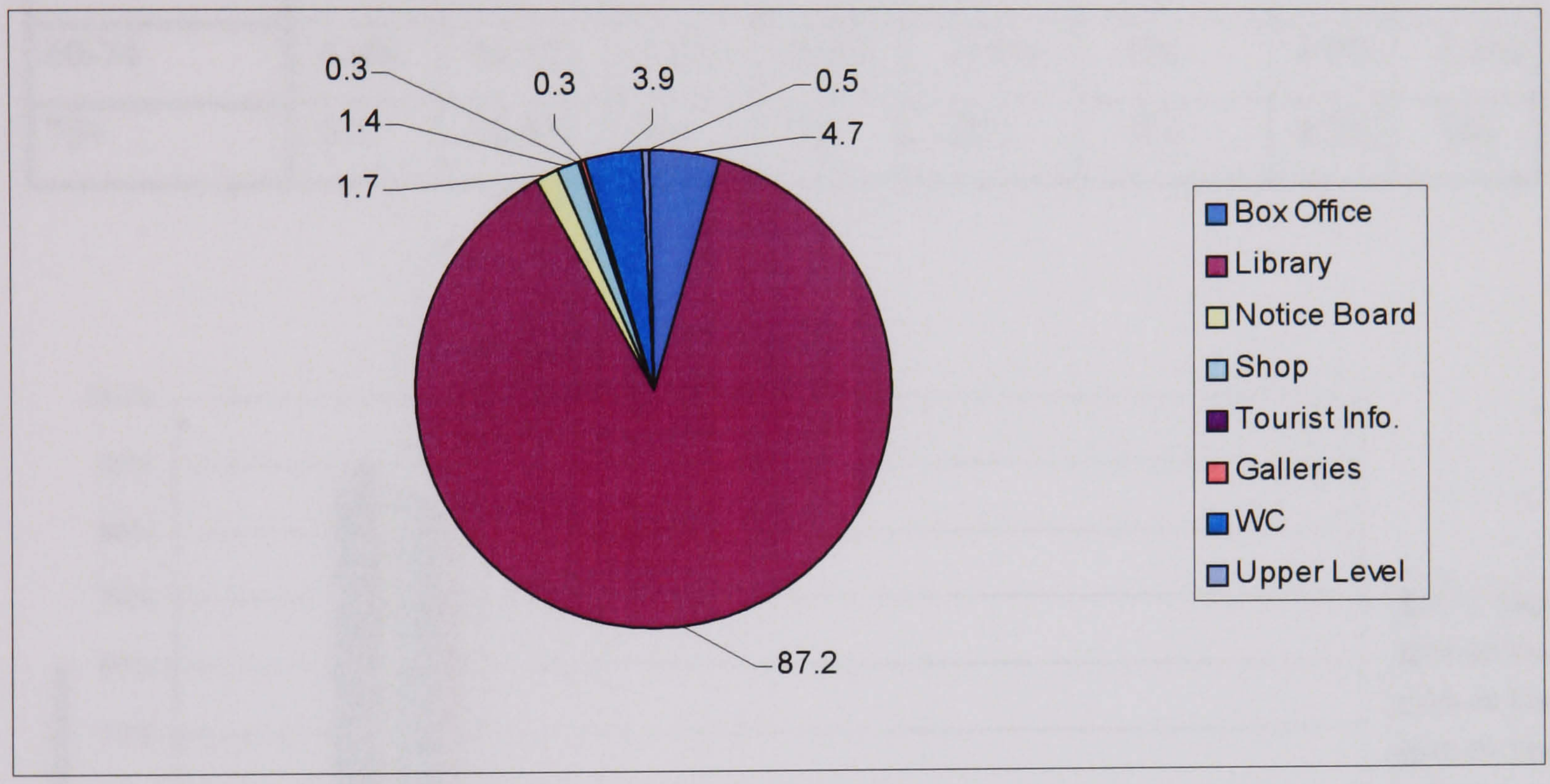

Diagram 2.2a: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Overall Distributions] [5]

As manifested in Data Chart 2.2 and Diagram 2.2a, an overwhelming majority of the observed visitors (87.2%) came to the *Clocktower* to use the library, which is the centre's most prominent facility. No significant differences were observed between the morning and afternoon counts, in this regard. Upon entering the centre, 4.7% of the observed visitors approached the box office, while 3.9% headed directly towards the toilets. The shop also attracted far more visitors during the afternoon (more than three times as many). This is mostly due to the substantial number of children and young teenagers that visit the centre after school hours, who often go into the souvenir shop.

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[5] *As the differences between the morning and afternoon counts were insignificant the pie chart represents only to the overall distribution.*

Data Chart 2.3: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Age Group Distributions]

'Destination' / Age Group	*A. Box Office*	*B. Library*	*C. Notice Board*	*D. Shop*	*E. Tourist Info.*	*F. Galleries*	*G. WC*	*H. Upper Level*
0-15	1.3%	86.6%	0.7%	4.0%	0%	0%	7.4%	0%
16-29	4.2%	89.8%	1.3%	1.0%	0%	0.5%	3.0%	0.2%
30-44	9.4%	83.9%	2.6%	0%	0.5%	0%	2.0%	1.6%
45-59	3.7%	86.1%	1.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	5.6%	0%
60-74	4.8%	84.0%	3.2%	2.4%	0.8%	0%	4.0%	0.8%
75+	0%	95.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4.2%	0%

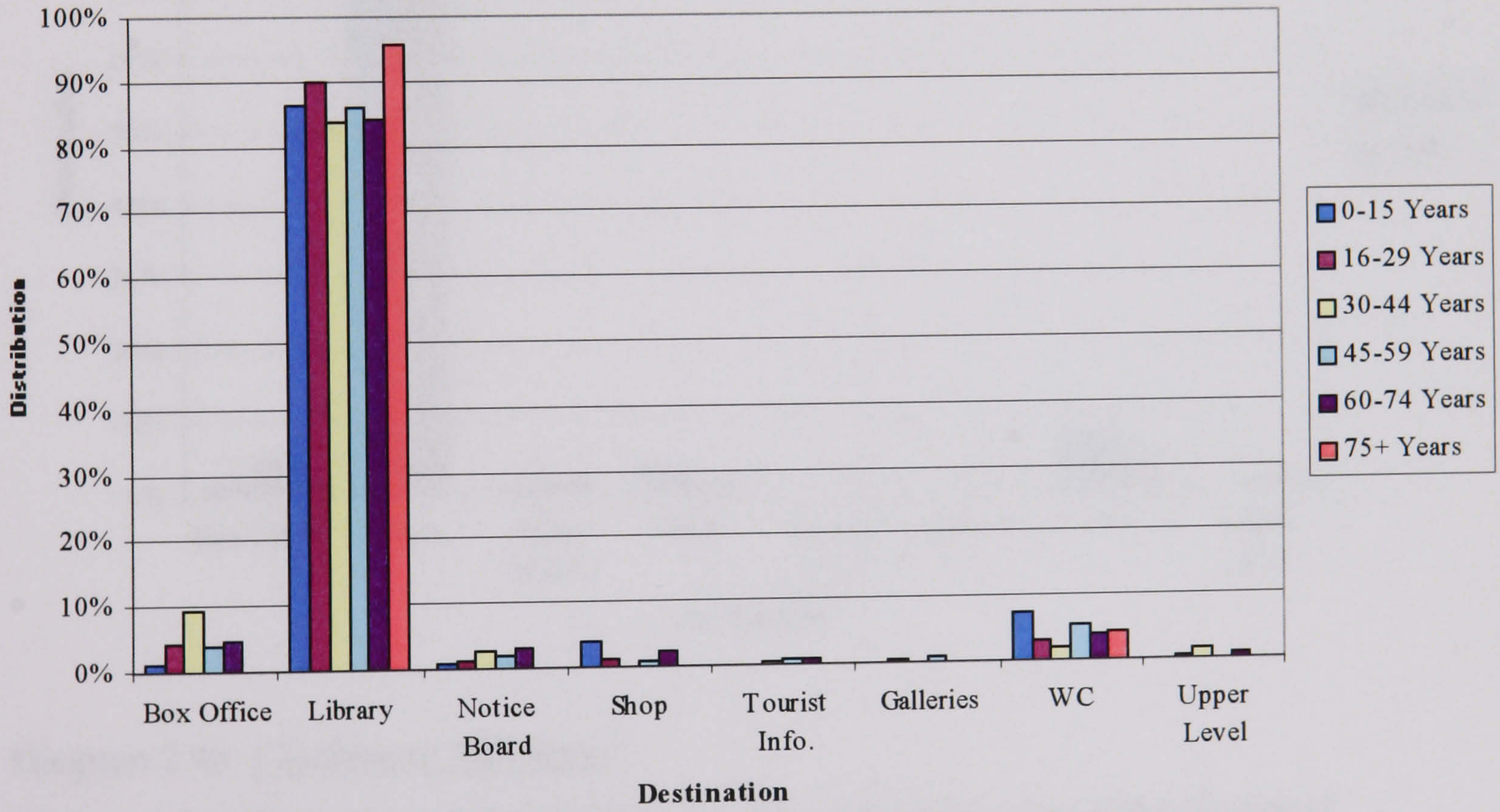

Diagram 2.3a: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Age Group Distributions]

Data Chart 2.4: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Overall Child / Adult Distributions]

'Destination' / Child / Adult	*A. Box Office*	*B. Library*	*C. Notice Board*	*D. Shop*	*E. Tourist Info.*	*F. Galleries*	*G. WC*	*H. Upper Level*
Children	1.3%	86.6%	0.7%	4.0%	0%	0%	7.4%	0%
Adults	5.3%	87.3%	1.9%	0.9%	0.35%	0.35%	3.3%	0.6%

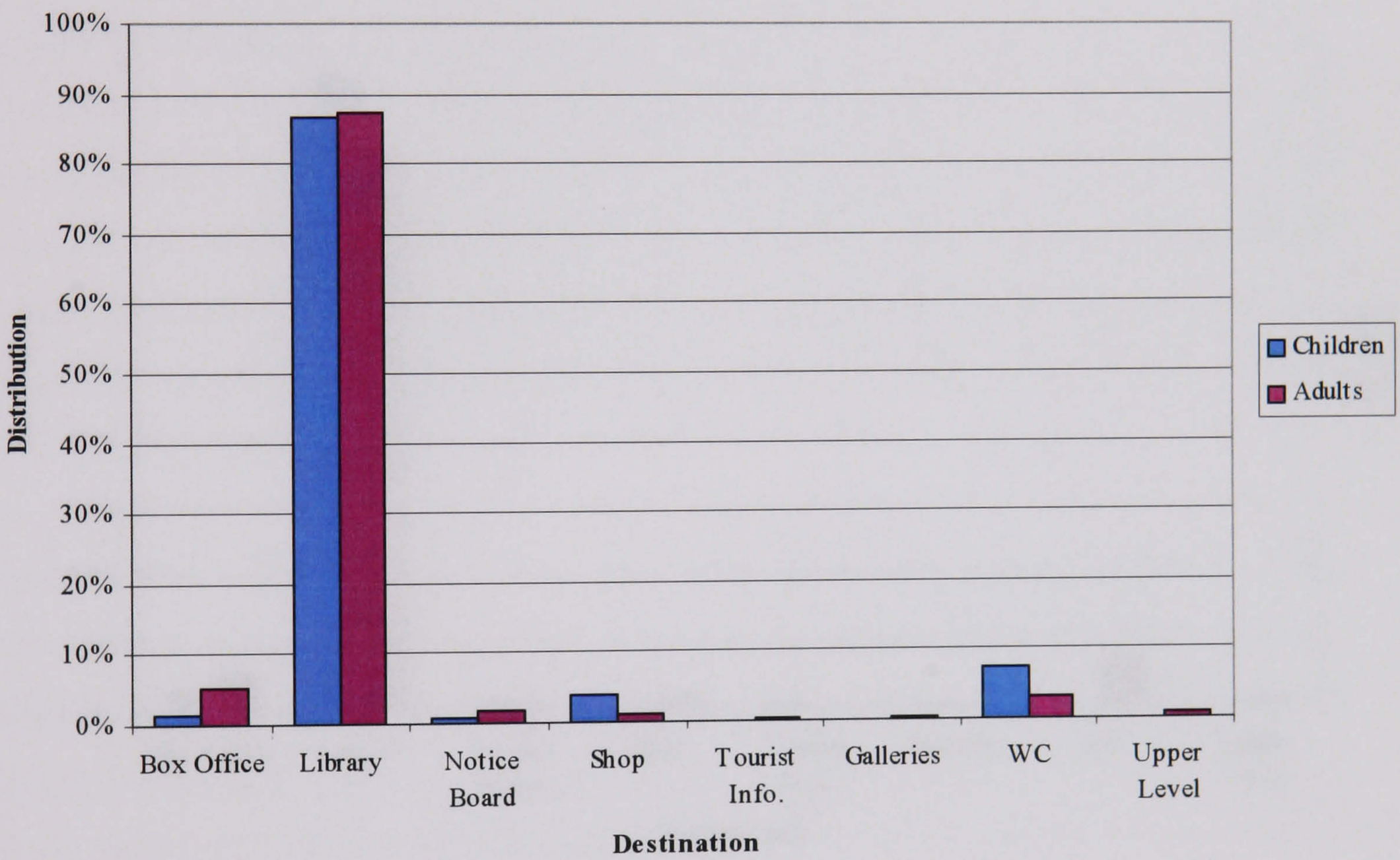

Diagram 2.4a: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Overall Child / Adult Distributions]

Data Chart 2.5: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Male / Female Distributions]

'Destination' / Gender	*A. Box Office*	*B. Library*	*C. Notice Board*	*D. Shop*	*E. Tourist Info.*	*F. Galleries*	*G. WC*	*H. Upper Level*
Male	3.2%	92.6%	1.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.8%	0%
Female	6.2%	81.8%	1.6%	2.2%	0%	0.2%	7.0%	1.0%

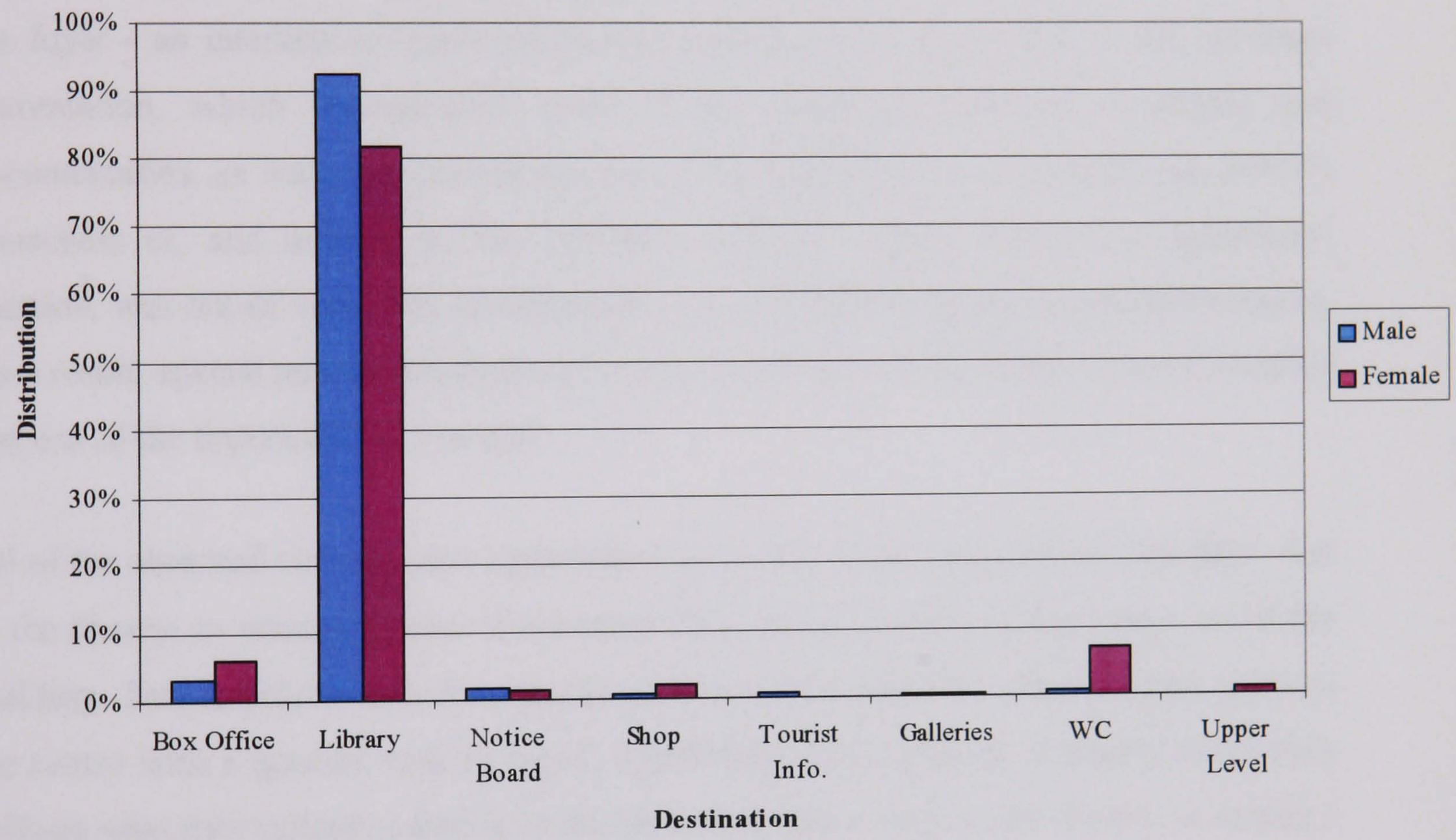

Diagram 2.5a: *Clocktower* 'Hot Spots'

Visitors' First 'Destination Point' Preferences [Male / Female Distributions]

As evident from Data Charts 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and their corresponding Diagrams, significantly more children used the shop and the toilets, compared with adults, and, naturally, far more adults than children used the box office services. Overall, significantly more females used the box office services, as well as the shop and the toilets. This may well indicate the central role females (especially mothers) play in accompanying children to various leisure activities, which often include a visit to the souvenir shop, as well as to the toilets. It may also explain the significantly larger number of adults, aged between thirty and forty-four (the majority of whom were mothers accompanying school-age children), who used the upper level facilities, either visiting *Lifetimes*, or going to the cinema.

Shortly before the visitor observation sessions commenced a new feature was added to the foyer - an interactive, touch-screen unit, similar to the ones used in the *Lifetimes* presentation, which incorporated some of the museum's real-life (hi)stories and documentaries, as well as a knowledge quiz. The intention was to increase the public's awareness of, and interest in, the *Lifetimes* museum, which, due to its upper-level location, was out of view and, consequently, out of mind for many *Clocktower* visitors. As a result, special attention was placed upon observing and recording visitors' reaction and use of the foyer's interactive unit.

All of the observed visitors, who approached the touch-screen unit, did so after their visit to the library, or whatever other 'destination' they chose, usually on their way out of the building. This correlates with the assumption that the *Clocktower's* regular users come to the centre with a specific task in mind, which they seem anxious to finish. Once they achieve what they initially came in to do, be it returning a book to the library, or seeing a film, they seem to be more at ease and therefore open to exploring something else.

Another explanation might be that people feel more comfortable using the touch-screen unit in the foyer after they have experienced the medium within the context of *Lifetimes*. Without any objects on display to surround the foyer's interactive unit it may appear out of place, especially to a first-time viewer, who might feel somewhat ambiguous as to what this 'machine' represents and how it should be used. This appeared to be the case with some of the older visitors, who seemed more reluctant to 'interact' with a computer than others. Having said that, the majority of visitors appeared to be intrigued by the interactive unit (although it was the bright coloured banner that first caught their attention) and eventually approached it.

Young children seemed to enjoy touching the screen and seeing how their actions affected the presentation, while the older children seemed more familiar with the *Lifetimes* interactive unit (perhaps as a result of an earlier school visit) and equally at ease with the multimedia medium. By contrast, the observed adult visitors, most of whom appeared to be unfamiliar with either *Lifetimes*, or its multimedia medium, were more cautious and would only approach the interactive unit if someone was already using it, which enabled them to study the touch-screen before engaging with it themselves. This kind of 'learning by observation' is described by Social Psychologists as 'modelling', which is, essentially, the ability to learn by copying the behaviour of other group members (Falk & Dierking, 1992: 49). Nevertheless, there were a few adult visitors who were obviously familiar with the medium, as they were on their way down from a visit to the *Lifetimes* museum. These visitors seemed very comfortable with using the touch-screen interactive unit, choosing either to view the stories, or, much like their children's preference, play the knowledge quiz. These findings are consistent with the observed visitor-preferences in the *Lifetimes* museum, which are discussed later on.

Overall, there were three fundamental features that seemed to be most useful in attracting visitors' attention: Colour - the touch-screen unit itself is a rather dull looking, grey device, however the bright yellow banner hanging directly above it was instrumental in attracting people's attention; Sound - the music and human voices that accompany the various stories and documentaries, along with the 'Well Done!' cries from the animated quiz-game were also useful in attracting attention and generating curiosity; People - this was undoubtedly the most significant factor. Seeing other people using the interactive unit, especially if they appeared to be having a good time, was the greatest incentive for other visitors to approach as well.

Visitor Profile

The Lifetimes Museum

The second stage of the systematic visitor observations was aimed at establishing an overall visitor profile for the *Lifetimes* museum, which would complement its annual survey data. The following account is an outcome of one thousand visitor 'Gate' counts, conducted during the months of November 1998 and December 1998. It is imperative to locate this data within its distinct temporal-boundaries, as it is representative of that, very specific, period of time.

In term of gender distribution - of the one thousand observed visitors to the *Lifetimes* museum, 44% were male and 56 % were female. This figure correlates with the museum's existing visitor profile. However, in terms of visitors' age group - the observed distribution was somewhat surprising, as demonstrated in Data Chart 2.6 and Diagram 2.6a.

Data Chart 2.6: Lifetimes Visitors' Profile

Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Observed Figures *(November - December 1998)*
0-15	44%
16-29	31%
30-44	12%
45-59	4%
60-74	8%
75+	1%

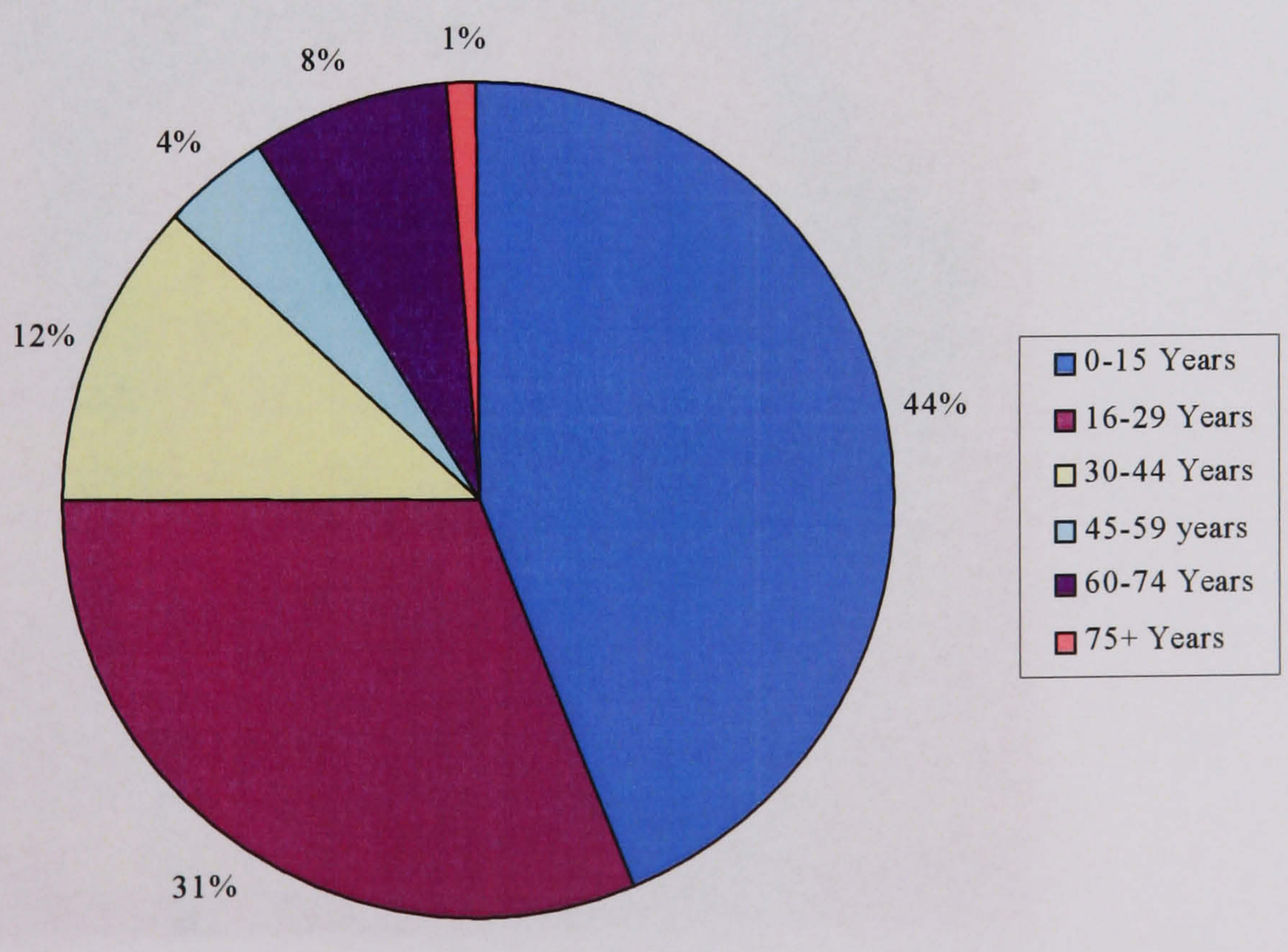

Diagram 2.6a: Lifetimes Visitors' Profile Age Group Distribution

The figures presented in Data Chart 2.6 and Diagram 2.6a do not correlate with the museum's typical visitor profile. This is, in all probability, a result of the special circumstances under which the data was collected. During the two-month period in which the museum's visitor profile observations took place, the temporary exhibition gallery was presenting a special children-targeted exhibition called *'Monster Creepy Crawlies'* [see Figure 2.5]. At the same time, the *Lifetimes* museum had a temporary display of Cicely Mary Barker's *'Flower Fairies'* illustrations [see Figure 2.6].

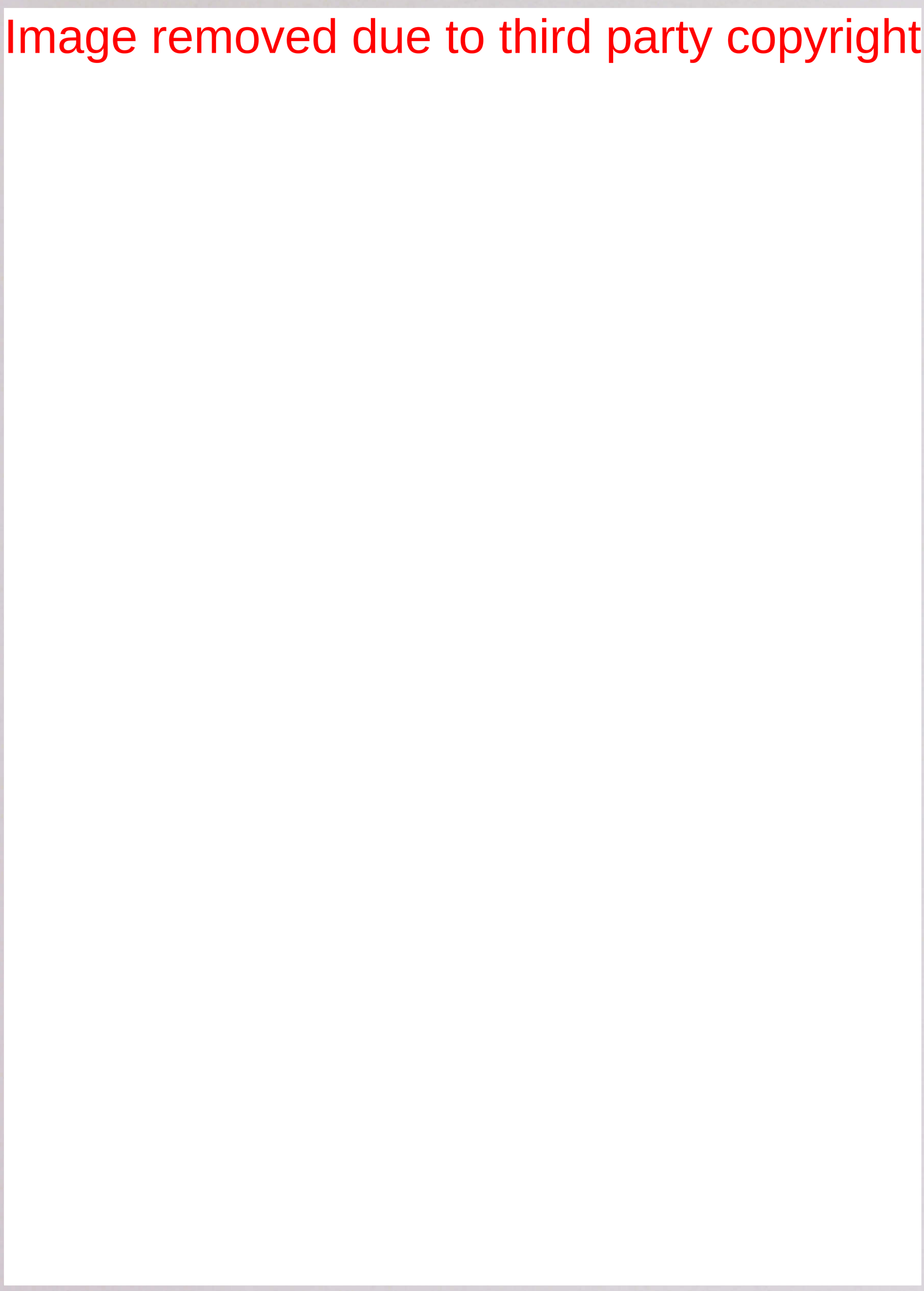

Figure 2.5: *'Monster Creepy Crawlies'* Exhibition – Promotional Pamphlet

[Presented with kind permission of the Croydon Museum Service]

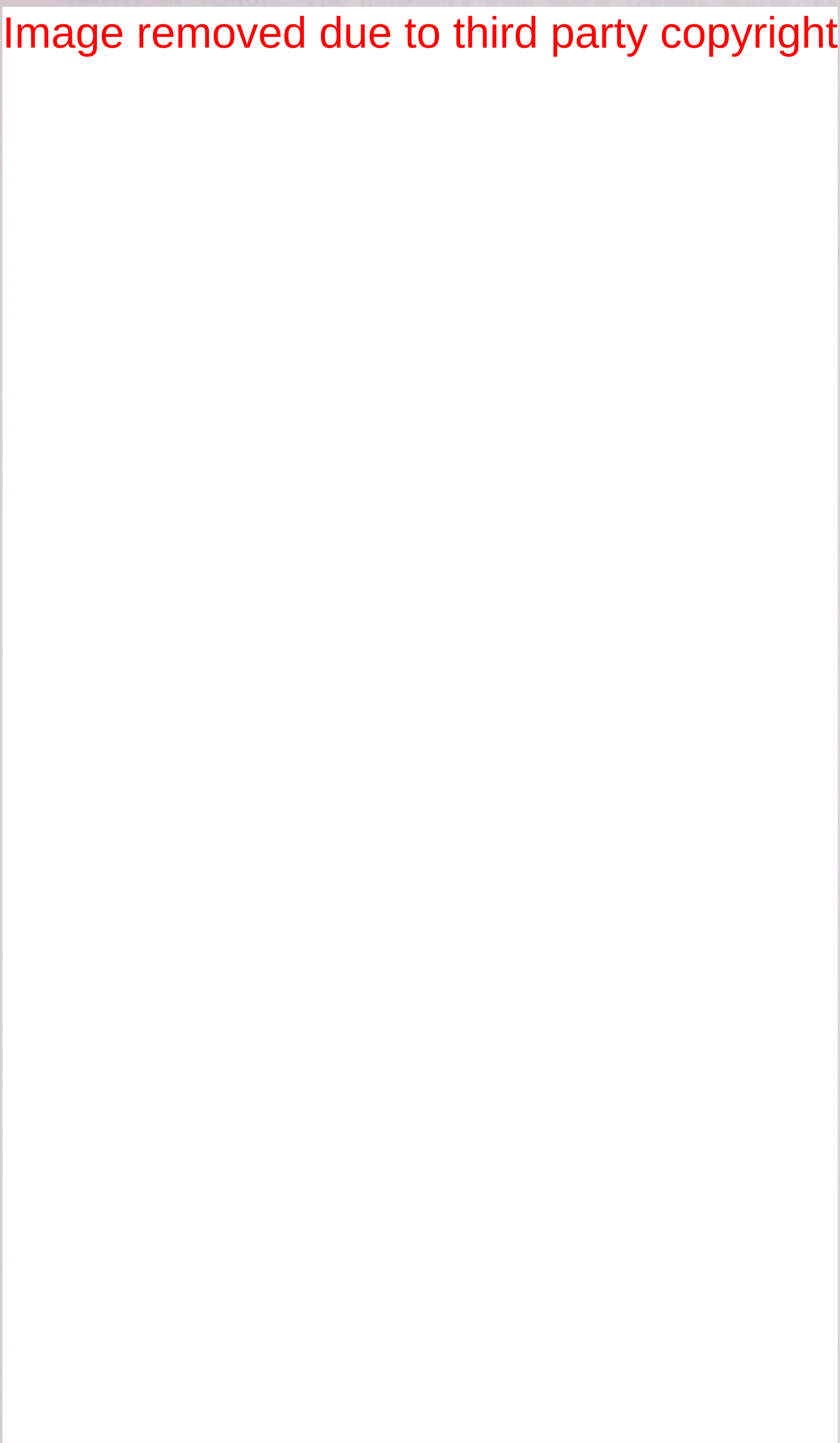

Figure 2.6: *'Flower Fairies'* Exhibition – Promotional Pamphlet

[Presented with kind permission of the Croydon Museum Service]

The two exhibitions proved exceptionally popular, attracting an unusual number and variety of visitors. The museum's joint ticket scheme meant that the overwhelming number of children and young teenagers, who came to the *'Monster Creepy Crawlies'* exhibition, often visited the *Lifetimes* museum as well, in order to see the rarely exhibited work of Cicely Mary Barker, in the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition. This may account for the considerably higher percentage of visitors aged fifteen or under (31% compared with the typical 17%) and, perhaps, for the lower percentage of visitors who are over sixty as well (8% compared with the typical 14%).

Data Chart 2.7: Lifetimes Visitors' Profile

Ethnic Group Distribution

Ethnic Origin Group	**Observed Figures** *(November - December 1998)*
Asian	3%
Black	2%
White	95%

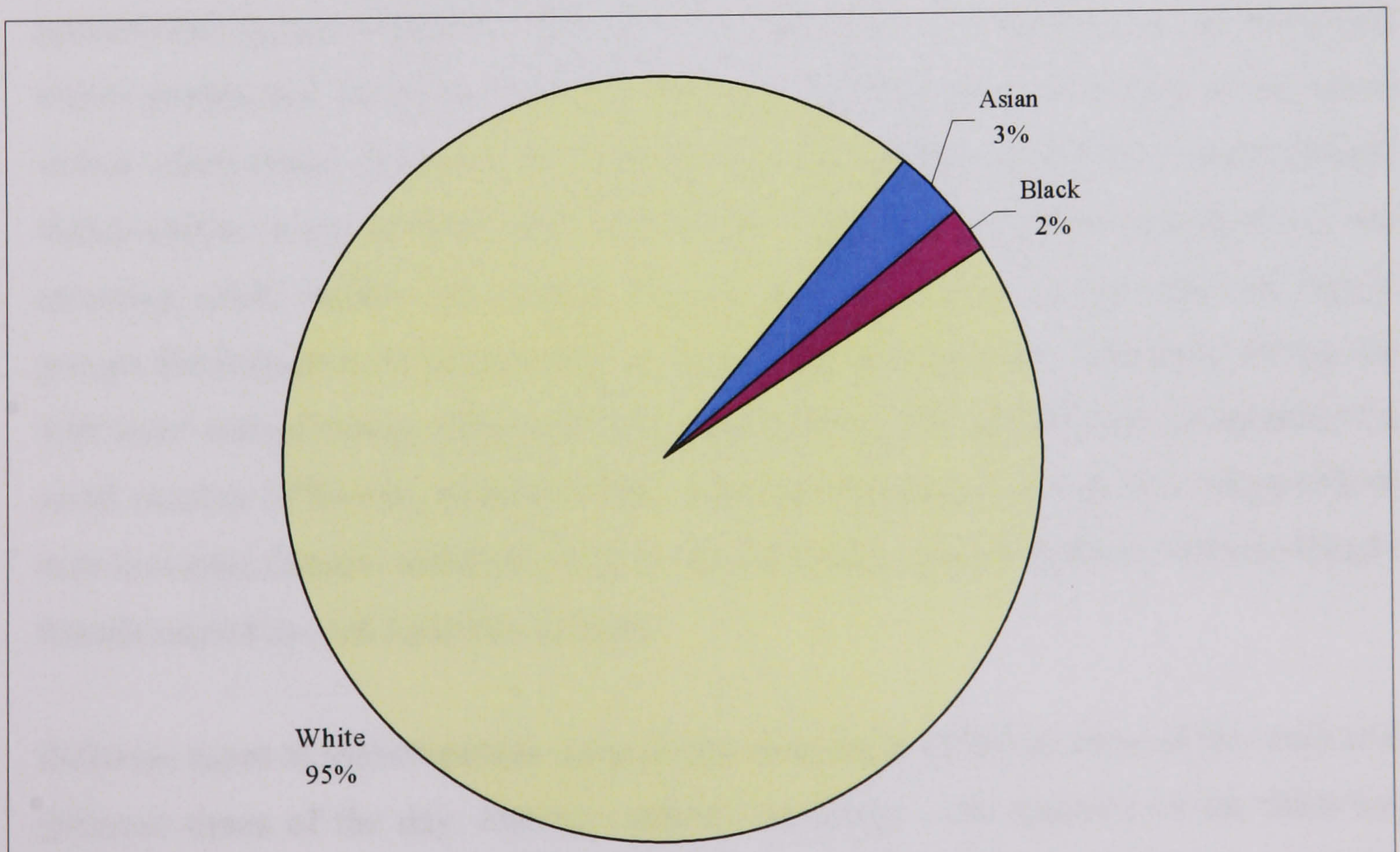

Diagram 2.7a: Lifetimes Visitors' Profile

Ethnic Group Distribution

In terms of the visitors' ethnic group distribution, the figures presented in Data Chart 2.7 and Diagram 2.7a were again, quite surprising, especially when compared with the museum's typical visitor profile. Of the one thousand observed *Lifetimes* visitors only 3% were Asian and 2% were Black, while 95% were White. This too, might be an outcome of the specific period of time in which the data was collected. In addition to the 'Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies' display, a special World War II live-interpretation event took place at the museum. Both attractions are perceived (according to the museum professionals) as predominantly 'White' in terms of interest and historical relevance. This may have contributed to the dramatically lower percentage (5% compared with the typical 20%) of visitors from ethnic minority groups that were observed at the museum during this time. Furthermore, only 1% of the one thousand observed *Lifetimes* visitors were visibly disabled. Again these figures do not represent the museum's typical visitor profile, which usually includes 4% of visibly disabled visitors. The abnormal overcrowding in the two galleries during this period may have been a stressful deterrent to the various disabled visitors and special-needs groups, which would account for these lower than average figures.

Approximately half of the visitors to *Lifetimes* (46%) are pre-booked school groups and special-need groups (Pattison, 1998: 3). The remaining 54% are private, non-organised visitor-parties and individual visitors. The latter two were the core focus of the initial visitor observation sessions. The majority of the observed, private, non-organised visitor-parties were families with school-age children, who often comprised of one escorting adult, usually the mother. Having said that, some of the observed family groups did include both parents and, at times, even grandparents, especially during the 'half term' school breaks. Other private visitor-parties characteristically comprised of a small number of friends, often from the same age and gender group. It is interesting to note that male friends tended to come to the museum in groups of three, whereas female friends tended to visit *Lifetimes* in pairs.

Different types of visitor-parties came to the museum at different times of the week and different times of the day. During weekday mornings - the majority of the observed individual visitor-parties were mothers with young children. Every so often two mothers would come in, with their children, as one large group. This enabled the mothers to spend some time together, while the children play together in a safe environment.

By contrast, the majority of the private visitor-parties who came in during weekday afternoons were small groups of school-age children. Couples, of all ages and genders, usually visited the museum during weekends and holidays, although rarely on their own, as they were frequently accompanied by their children, or grandchildren, and, occasionally, by other couples. Correlating with the museum's typical visitor profile, teenage visitors and young-adult visitors, (particularly college-age students), as well as elderly visitors, were seldom observed, neither during the museum's 'Gate' count period, nor during its prolonged visitor observation sessions, which are discussed in the following sub-section.

Visitor Dynamics

The Lifetimes Museum

A total of one hundred observation sessions were conducted within the *Lifetimes* museum over a twelve and a half month period. The third stage focused upon producing a detailed visitor dynamics analysis that would highlight visitors' practices, preferences and measured attention spans during the visit, as well as their observed reactions and interactions. The observations took place over a set period of time, at a set location, with each observation centring upon one individual visitor. The observed visitors were chosen from a random group of people who entered the museum during the observation session slot. Having said that, special care was taken to ensure that the sample, small as it may be, would be representative of *Lifetimes'* existing visitor profile.

The museum's overall visiting dynamics seemed to follow a clear pattern. Weekdays were often quiet, with few visitors, apart from the pre-booked groups. This was especially evident during the beginning of the week. Still, as the week progressed the museum became increasingly busy, reaching two 'peak' visiting times - Wednesday afternoons, during the free 'Happy Hour' and Saturdays. School holidays and 'half term' breaks were often very busy as well, along with the monthly all-day 'weekend events', which were repeated on both the Saturday and the Sunday. The 'weekend events' had a dramatic impact on the number of visitors to *Lifetimes* on the particular weekend in which they took place, and especially during the Sundays, which were otherwise extremely quiet, since the library and other *Clocktower* facilities were closed.

Two factors seemed to influence the museum's overall visiting dynamics - (1) The amount of publicity and consequent public interest in the latest temporary exhibition. A new exhibition often provided a reason for re-visiting the *Clocktower* galleries. Once the visitors saw the temporary exhibition they were interested in, they would, occasionally, come up to have a 'brief glance' at the permanent *Lifetimes* exhibition. Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority of the observed visitors (who were later interviewed) had never visited the museum before, nor were they aware of its existence. Moreover, hardly any of the long-term 'visitor' informants were frequent visitors to *Lifetimes*, with the exception of those who were actively involved with the museum's multimedia presentations and special, monthly events. In fact, most of my long-term 'visitor-informants' only visited the museum once throughout the fieldwork period. (2) The weather seemed to have played a principal role in influencing the observed visiting dynamics, considering the visible decrease in visitor numbers during both extremely bad-weather days, and extremely good-weather days. Ideal 'museum visiting weather' appeared to be of the infamous 'scattered showers with sunny intervals' kind, during which people's preference seemed to be to spend time outside the home, yet in a sheltered place, such as a museum.

Visitors' experience of *Lifetimes* and their observed practices, preferences and attention spans, seemed to follow particular patterns, which varied considerably according to the visitor's age and gender. The following account, which combines both the qualitative observation material and the quantitative data that emerged from this study, demonstrates various visitor dynamics patterns, which are then summarised in inclusive statistical charts [see Data Charts 2.8 - 2.14] alongside the accompanying Graphs and 'Museum Maps' [see Diagrams 2.8 a - 2.15a].

Visitor's Practices & Preferences

In terms of gender distribution [see Data Chart 2.8, as well as Diagrams 2.8a and 2.8b] - male visitors approached more displays than female visitors, and in greater numbers. For example, the 'Market Town' (1830-1880) display was approached by 88% of the observed male visitors, compared with 66% of the observed female visitors. The 'War and Austerity' (1939-1955) display was approached by 95% of the male visitors, compared with only 69% of the female visitors.

However, the 'hands-on', children-oriented displays were approached by far more female visitors than male visitors, which is not surprising considering that the majority of the observed female visitors were mothers accompanying children. The 'Costumes & Hats' area, was approached by 34% of the female visitors, compared with 12% of the male visitors. The 'Walk Out In Style' shoes display attracted 57% of the females, but only 12% of the males. The various jigsaw puzzles were approached by 26% of the women, all of whom accompanied young children, compared with 10% of the men. The central settee, where the text and photo files were located, were approached by 24% of the female visitors, while only 10% of the male visitors did the same. However, this does not necessarily indicate that more of the female visitors read the files. Some of them, especially those with young children, simply took advantage of an opportunity to sit down.

In terms of age group distribution there is a similar variety between the groups [see Data Chart 2.8, and Diagrams 2.8c; 2.8d and 2.8e]. Young children seemed to be attracted to the more sensory-stimulating objects on display, and especially those they were allowed to touch and play with, such as the red telephone receivers (which are part of the touch-screen interactive unit), the 'try-on' costumes, hats and shoes, as well as the various jigsaw puzzles, and so on. The majority of the observed young visitors were very excited about the life-size, red bubble car in the 'Mini Manhattan' display and overjoyed by being allowed to pet the stuffed calf in the 'Market Town' display. School-age children seemed to be more interested in the interactive elements of the displays, like the dentist's chair and especially the World War II Anderson Shelter replica. Younger school-age children were occasionally afraid of the Anderson Shelter replica, as it is quite dark inside. However, for the older children it was an absolute favourite, perhaps because it enabled them to experience what it would feel like to be in an air-raid, as it reconstructs the physical aspects of the experience - from the darkness and coolness of the shelter to the recorded 'air-raid' sounds that appeared to come from 'above'. These qualitative observations seamlessly correlate with the statistical data that emerged from the quantitative observations and 'counts', given that 80% of the observed young visitors (aged fifteen or under) approached the World War II Anderson Shelter replica, and 60% approached the 'War and Austerity' (1939-1955) display. In addition, 40% of the observed young visitors approached the dentist's chair, 60% played with the costumes and hats, and 70% played with the shoes [see Data Chart 2.8 and Diagram 2.8c].

Adult visitors (between the age of sixteen and fifty-nine) seemed especially interested in the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) display, as well as the 'War and Austerity' (1939-1955) display and the 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970) display. All of the observed adult visitors who approached the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) display seemed to be particularly excited by the fireplace. They often responded physically, pointing towards the fireplace and telling their accompanying friends or family, with excited, raised voices (enough to be overheard from afar) that their mother, or grandmother, had a fireplace just like that one. Of all the objects on display, the fireplace seemed especially significant, as it brought up early memories and induced spontaneous reminiscing. Overall, adult visitors seemed more attracted to the near-past displays, which evoked their own childhood memories. They were generally less interested in the far and unfamiliar past, as well as in the near and all-too-familiar present. Again, the qualitative observations are reflected in the quantitative material, inasmuch as 77% of the observed adult visitors (aged sixteen to fifty-nine) approached the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) display, 78% approached the 'War and Austerity' (1939-1955) display, and 73% approached the 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970) display [see Data Chart 2.8 and Diagram 2.8d]. Visitors aged sixty or over seemed to be more interested in the earlier historical presentations and frequently asked for additional information on Croydon's early history and pre-historical times. They seemed curious about past-times, both within their living memory and beyond. Still, the older visitors approached the more recent historical displays, as well as the future display, more often than other visitors. Overall, a higher percentage of the observed older visitors approached a higher percentage of the displays. The 'Early History' information panel was approached by 50% of the older visitors (compared with 9% of the adult visitors, and none of the young visitors). Both the 'Market Town' (1830-1880) and the 'Turn of the Century' (1881-1918) displays were approached by 92% of the older visitors. The 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) display was approached by 96% of the older visitors, while the 'Croydon Now' (1971-today) display was approached by 88% and the 'Future' display was approached by 77% of the older visitors [see Data Chart 2.8 and Diagram 2.8e].

Data Chart 2.8 and its accompanying 'Museum Maps' [see Diagrams 2.8a - 2.8e] show the percentage of observed visitors who approached each of the displays, thereby representing the *Lifetimes* museum's most popular venues, or 'Hot Spots'. The visitor preferences are shown in terms of gender and age group only, since no significant differences were observed between the preferences of visitors from different ethnic groups, or of visible disability.

Data Chart 2.8: Museum 'Hot Spots' - Visitors' Preferences

Percentage of Visitors Approaching Each Display [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Display	01	02	03	Silent Movie	04	05	06	07	08
All	19.0%	75.0%	72.0%	27.0%	18.0%	79.0%	68.0%	80.0%	19.0%
Female	15.5%	65.5%	60.3%	27.6%	24.1%	72.4%	63.8%	69.0%	25.9%
Male	23.8%	88.1%	88.1%	26.2%	9.5%	88.1%	73.8%	95.2%	9.5%
Age 0-15	0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	0%	50.0%	80.0%	60.0%	30.0%
Age 16-59	9.4%	75.0%	70.3%	21.9%	12.5%	76.6%	64.1%	78.1%	23.4%
Age 60+	50.0%	92.3%	92.3%	46.1%	38.5%	96.1%	73.1%	92.3%	3.9%
Display	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
All	25.0%	74.0%	30.0%	68.0%	57.0%	48.0%	38.0%	36.0%	
Female	34.9%	58.6%	41.4%	55.2%	51.7%	58.6%	56.9%	31.0%	
Male	11.9%	95.2%	14.3%	85.7%	64.3%	33.3%	11.9%	42.9%	
Age 0-15	60.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	70.0%	80.0%	
Age 16-59	23.4%	73.4%	32.8%	67.2%	54.7%	43.7%	40.6%	35.9%	
Age 60+	15.4%	88.5%	19.2%	88.5%	76.9%	69.2%	19.2%	19.2%	

Museum-Display Index:

01) Early History; 02) 'Market Town' (1830-1880); 03) 'Turn of The Century' (1881-1918); 04) Photo & Text Files; 05) 'Suburbia' (1919-1938); 06) W.W.II Anderson Shelter; 07) 'Wartime & Austerity' (1939-1955); 08) Jigsaw Puzzles; 09) Costumes & Hats; 10) 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970); 11) Dentist Chair; 12) Croydon Now' (1971-Today); 13) The Future; 14) Temporary Exhibition Area; 15) 'Walk Out In Style' (Shoes); 16) Additional Touch-Screens On Mezzanine Floor;

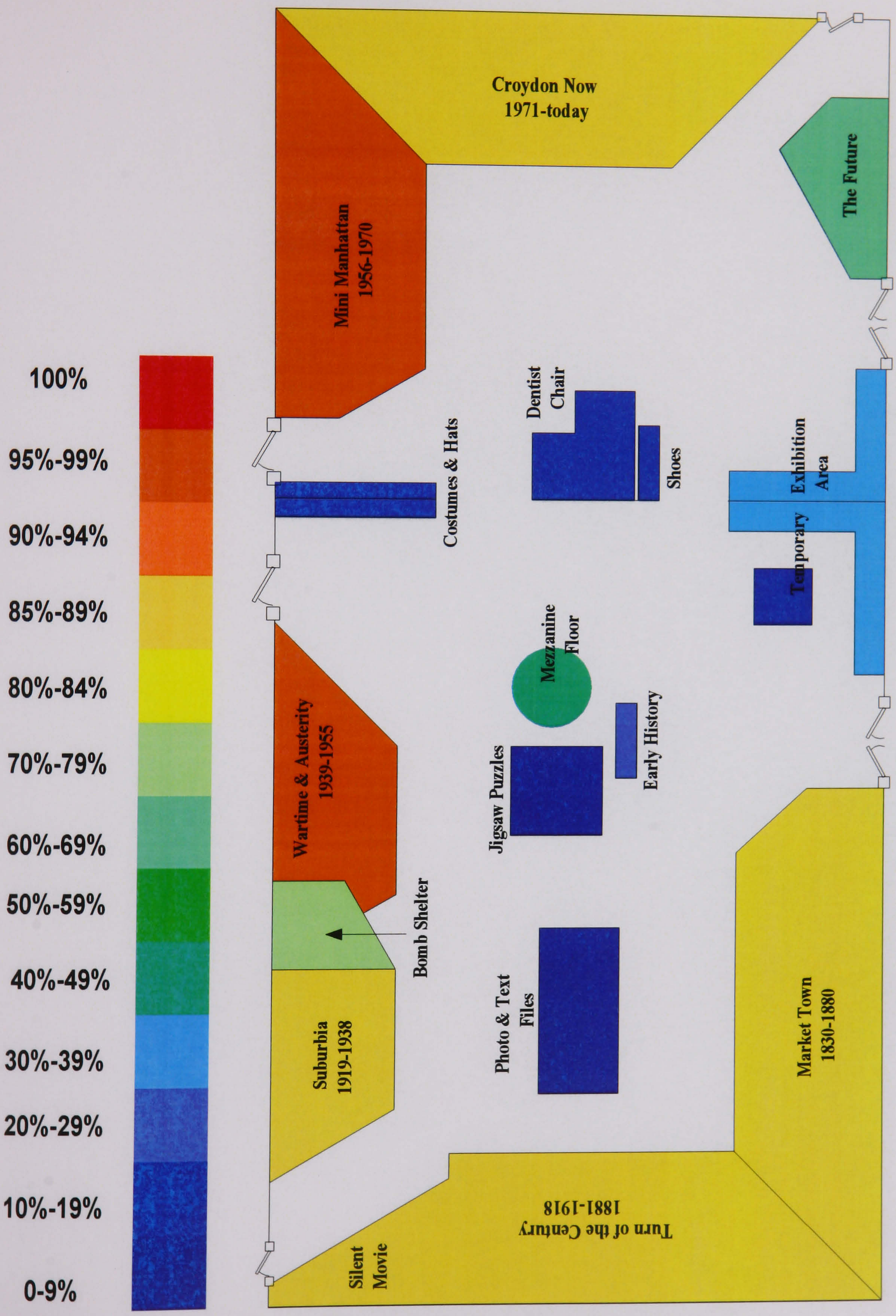

Diagram 2.8a: Museum 'Hot Spots' Map - Male Visitors' Preferences

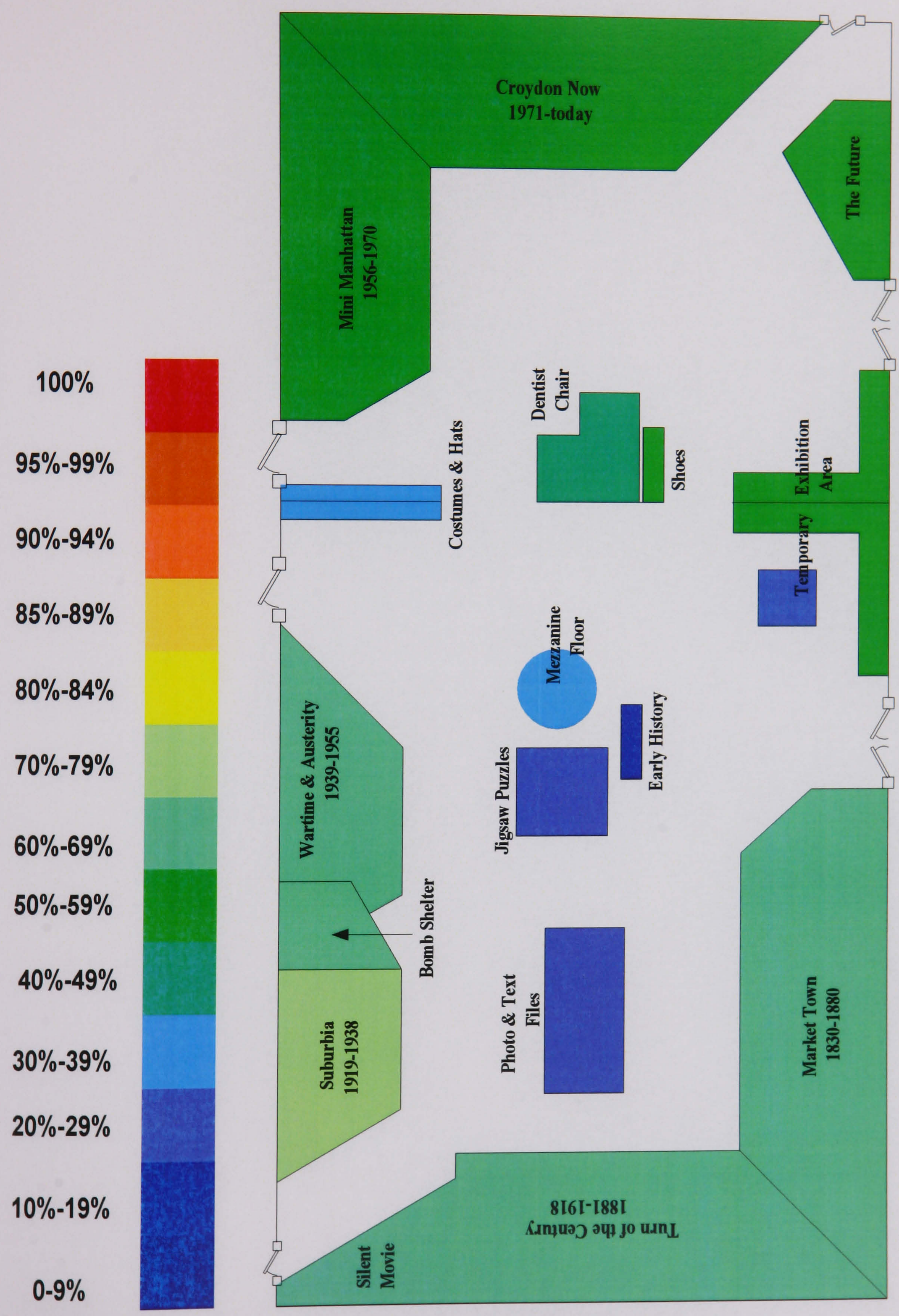

Diagram 2.8b: Museum 'Hot Spots' Map - Female Visitors' Preferences

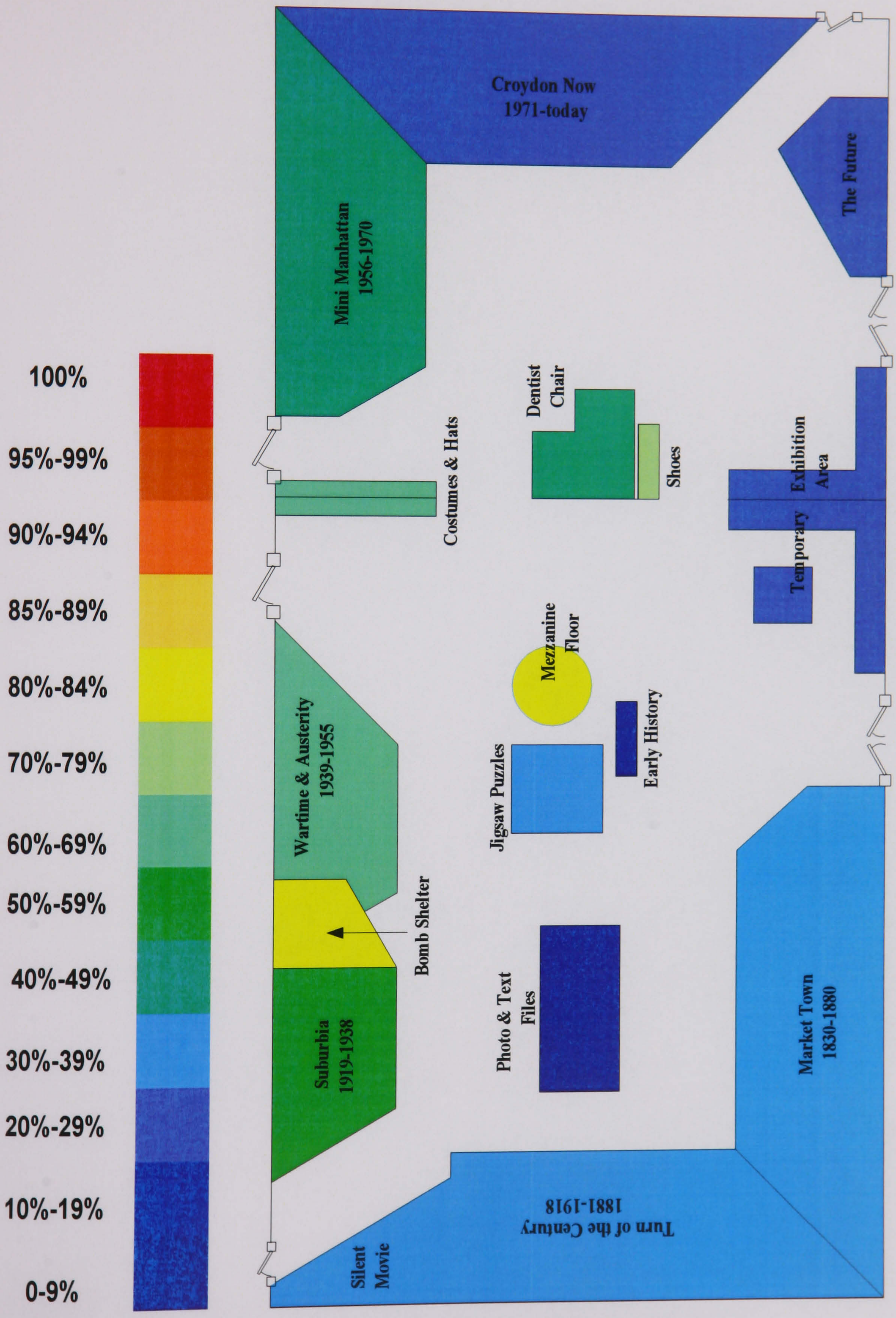

Diagram 2.8c: Museum 'Hot Spots' Map - Young Visitors' Preferences

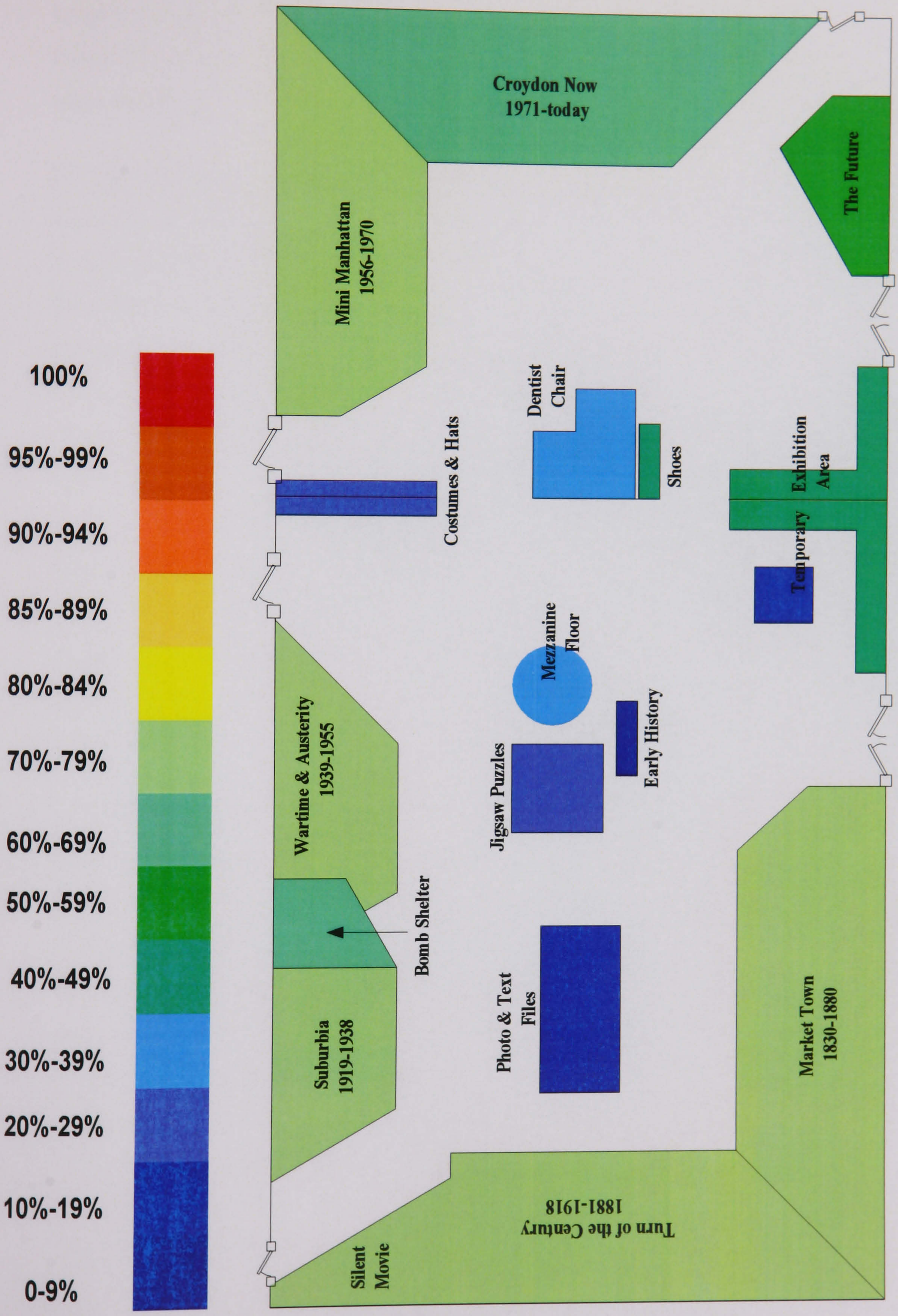

Diagram 2.8d: Museum 'Hot Spots' Map - Adult Visitors' Preferences

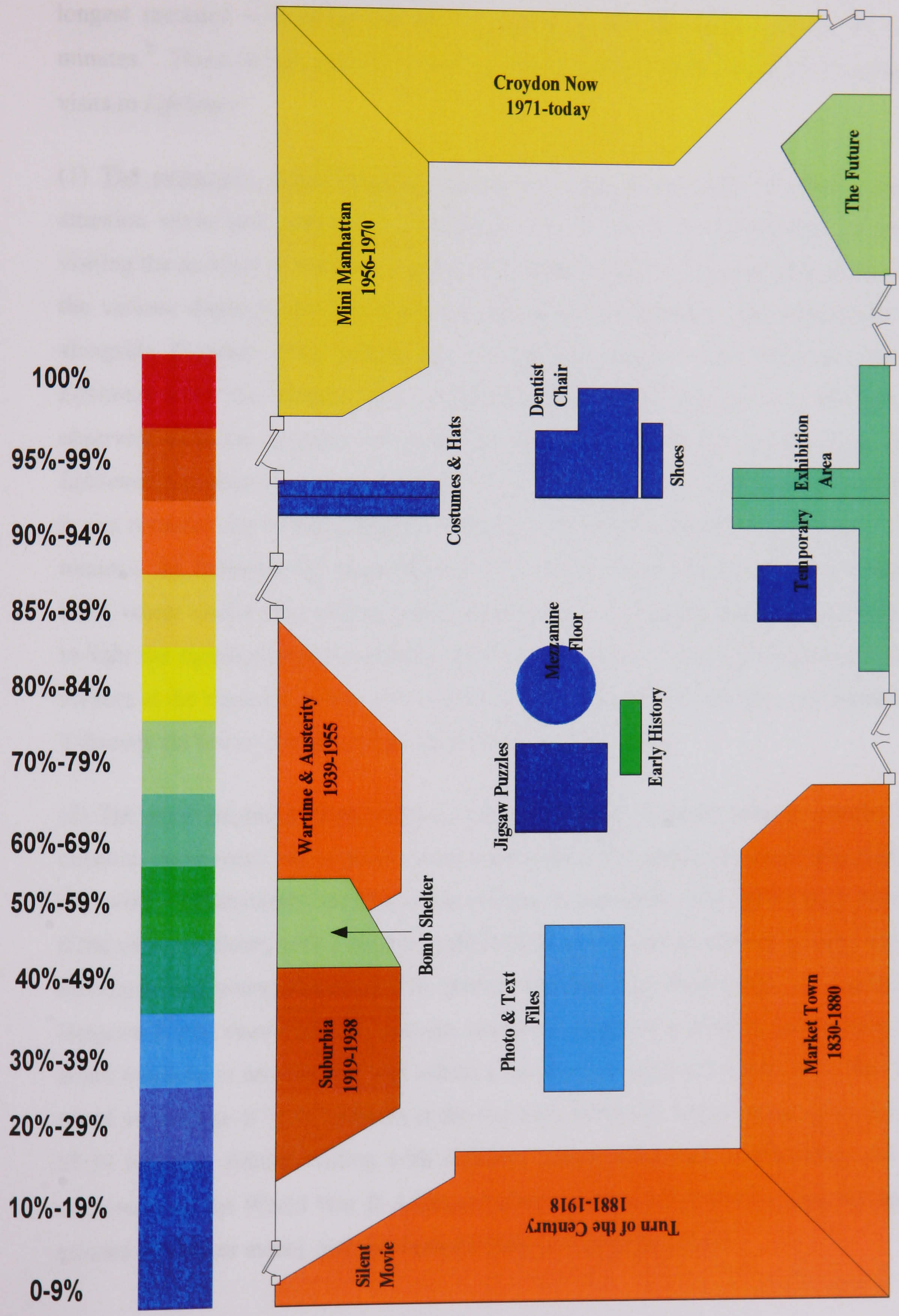

Diagram 2.8e: Museum 'Hot Spots' Map - Elderly Visitors' Preferences

Visitor's Attention Span

The amount of time visitors spend at the museum can fluctuate considerably. The longest recorded visit lasted for 60:09 minutes, while the shortest lasted for 03:18 minutes [2]. Three factors seemed to have an effect on the overall length of the observed visits to *Lifetimes* -

(1) The museum's 'crowd density' level at the time of the visit: Visitors' recorded attention spans and preferences seemed to be influenced by the number of people visiting the museum at the time, and the consequent levels of noise and ease of access to the various displays and touch-screens. The statistical analysis [see Data Chart 2.9, alongside Diagram 2.9a] reveals that the average length of the observed visits to *Lifetimes* when the museum was relatively empty (39:28 minutes) is similar to that observed when the museum was relatively crowded (38:18 minutes). However, when *Lifetimes* was empty the average length of visits decreased to 32:08 minutes, and when it was crowded the average length of recorded visiting time reached its lowest - 15:04 minutes. As indicated by these figures, there seems to be an optimal crowd density level, where visitors feel neither unaccompanied nor smothered. The findings also bring to light the significance attributed by the observed visitors to the mere presence of other visitors at the museum, even if the visitors seldom expressed it verbally, nor acted upon it directly (in terms of communicating with the other visitors).

(2) The structure and characteristics of the visitor party: Visitors seem to modify their conduct, preferences and attention spans according to the people accompanying them on their visit. Consequently, the length and content of a museum visit can be quite different if the visitor is alone, with a partner, with friends, or with family (and in particular when accompanying young children). The quantitative data [see Data Chart 2.10, alongside Diagram 2.10a] shows that, on average, adults accompanying children spend more time at the museum in comparison with adults who visit the gallery on their own. The latter spend an average of 31:20 minutes at the museum, while the former spend an average of 37:39 minutes. Adults visiting with children, spend more time at the shoes and the costume area, the World War II Anderson Shelter replica (four times more), the jigsaw puzzles (six times more), and the dentist's chair (seven times more).

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[2] *The actual time of these visits was slightly longer, as the presented figures are only a sum of the time measurements for each display.*

The findings coincide with several, contemporary visitor studies. Bitgood's study (1987) of visitor behaviour in museums, parks, and zoos, highlights the effects of 'architectural factors', such as visibility of, and proximity to the display, as well as 'crowd factors', which, depending on the conditions, can either attract, or repel the visitors. McManus's work (1987, 1988) explores the effects of 'group composition' on visitors' conduct, demonstrating how people tailor their behaviour to suit their companions.

(3) Individual interests and attention levels: The amount of time a visitor spends in *Lifetimes*, (or any other museum for that matter) is naturally influenced by their personal level of interest in the various displays and their individual attention-span level. These factors vary dramatically between different age and gender groups, as the statistical analysis demonstrates [see Data Chart 2.11, and Diagrams 2.11a - 2.11e].

The elderly visitors (aged sixty or over) had the greatest attention span. They often dedicated much longer periods of time to study each of the displays. Unsurprisingly, the younger visitors (aged fifteen or under) demonstrated the lowest attention span. Overall, young visitors spent an average of 31:25 minutes at the museum, while adult visitors (aged sixteen to fifty-nine) spent only a slightly longer time - an average of 32:30 minutes. However, elderly visitors spent a considerably longer time at the museum - an average of 46:40 minutes. The female visitors seemed to have a slightly higher attention span than the male visitors, averaging 36:07 minutes per visit, compared with the male average of 34:19 minutes per visit. The male visitors spent the greatest amount of their overall museum-visiting time upstairs, by the touch-screen interactive units on the mezzanine floor - an average of 6:17 minutes, while the female visitors spent the greatest amount of their museum-visiting time at the 'War & Austerity' (1939-1955) display - an average of 4:10 minutes [see Data Chart 2.11, and Diagrams 2.11a - 2.11e].

The younger visitors (aged fifteen or under) spent the greatest amounts of their overall museum-visiting time playing with the children-oriented interactive displays. They spent an average of 3:09 minutes at the costumes and hats area, and an average of 1:50 minutes at the 'Walk out in style' shoe display. The Anderson Shelter replica attracted their attention for an average of 1:48 minutes, while the dentist's chair, which often involved role-playing games, captured their attention for an average of 3:12 minutes.

However, the greatest amount of time was spent playing with the jigsaw puzzles - an average of 4:06 minutes. These figures often represent younger children, playing with an adult. The older children spent more time upstairs by the touch-screen interactive units on the mezzanine floor - an average of 3:25 minutes [see Data Chart 2.11, and Diagram 2.11c].

The adult visitors (aged sixteen to fifty-nine) spent the greatest amount of their overall museum-visiting time in front of the 'War & Austerity' (1939-1955) display (an average of 3:35 minutes), as well as at the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) display (an average of 3:02 minutes). They also spent a considerable amount of time (an average of 3:28 minutes) upstairs, by the interactive units on the mezzanine floor [see Data Chart 2.11, and Diagram 2.11d].

The older visitors (aged sixty or over) spent a great amount of their overall museum-visiting time at the 'War & Austerity' (1939-1955) display (an average of 4:37 minutes), as well as at the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) display (an average of 4:22 minutes). However, they spent even more time 'playing' with the jigsaw puzzles - an average of 5:02 minutes, which most probably represents escorting grandparents playing with their grandchildren. Be that as it may, the greatest amount of time (an average of 10:53 minutes) was spent upstairs, by the interactive units on the mezzanine floor [see Data Chart 2.11, and Diagram 2.11e].

Once again, these findings correlate with those presented by Bitgood's study (1987), which validate the importance of interactive elements, as well as sensory qualities, such as lighting, composition, dimension, motion, sound, and especially the opportunity to touch, and their effect on visitors' attention span and overall behaviour.

Data Charts 2.9, 2.10 and 2.11, along with Diagrams 2.9a, 2.10a, and 2.11a - 2.11e, show the average amount of time spent by the observed visitors at each of the museum displays, thereby representing the museum's 'Spell' in terms of both its overall allure and the typical attention span of its visitors. The average time spent at each display is shown as corresponding to crowd density levels; visitor-party characteristics; as well as age group and gender distributions. Since no significant differences were observed between the average attention span of visitors from different ethnic groups, or of visible disability, these factors were excluded from both the statistical and the graphical representations.

Average Time Spent at Each Display [Corresponding to Crowd Density Levels]

Display	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
Crowded		0:00:58	0:01:22		0:01:40	0:00:10	0:02:34	
Relatively Crowded	0:01:39	0:02:03	0:02:47	0:02:49	0:02:49	0:00:56	0:03:43	0:04:20
Relatively Empty	0:01:16	0:02:51	0:03:41	0:02:02	0:03:55	0:01:04	0:04:15	0:03:17
Empty	0:01:26	0:02:32	0:02:55	0:01:02	0:03:24	0:00:17	0:03:35	0:01:23

Display	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	SUM
Crowded	0:00:20	0:01:38	0:00:56	0:01:09	0:01:39	0:01:43	0:00:44	0:00:11	**0:15:04**
Relatively Crowded	0:03:27	0:02:17	0:01:50	0:01:48	0:00:47	0:01:48	0:01:37	0:03:38	**0:38:18**
Relatively Empty	0:02:28	0:02:06	0:02:30	0:01:54	0:00:50	0:01:48	0:01:08	0:04:23	**0:39:28**
Empty	0:01:30	0:02:18	0:01:41	0:01:46	0:00:34	0:00:35	0:00:29	0:06:41	**0:32:08**

Museum-Display Index:

01) Early History; 02) 'Market Town' (1830-1880); 03) 'Turn of The Century' (1881-1918); 04) Photo & Text Files; 05) 'Suburbia' (1919-1938); 06) W.W.II Anderson Shelter; 07) 'Wartime & Austerity' (1939-1955); 08) Jigsaw Puzzles; 09) Costumes & Hats; 10) 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970); 11) Dentist Chair; 12) Croydon Now' (1971-Today); 13) The Future; 14) Temporary Exhibition Area; 15) 'Walk Out In Style' (Shoes); 16) Additional Touch-Screens On Mezzanine Floor;

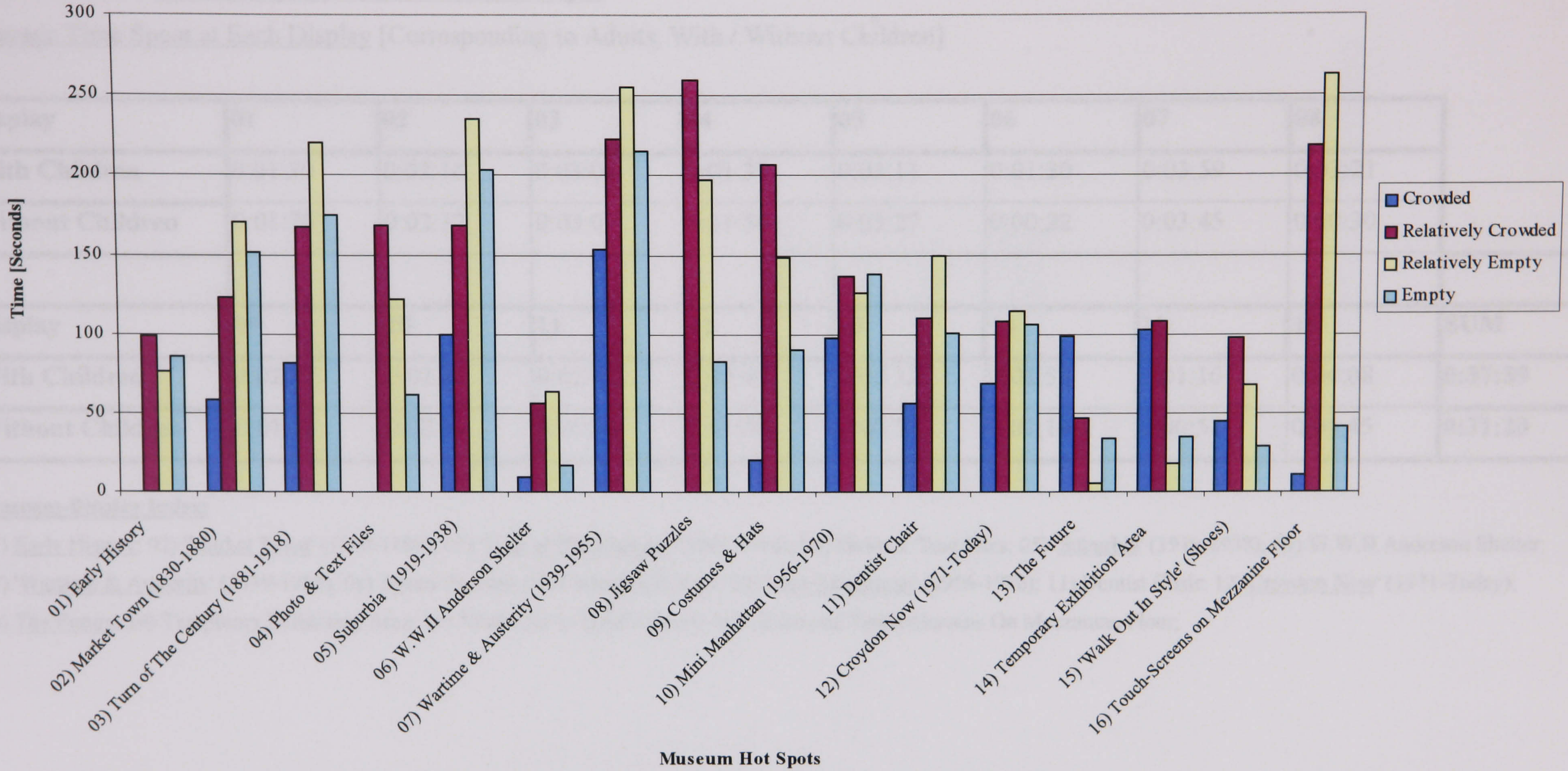

Diagram 2.9a: Museum 'Spell' - Visitors' Attention Span

Average Time Spent at Each Display [Corresponding to Crowd Density Levels]

Data Chart 2.10: Museum 'Spell' - Visitors' Attention Span

Average Time Spent at Each Display [Corresponding to Adults, With / Without Children]

Display	**01**	**02**	**03**	**04**	**05**	**06**	**07**	**08**	
With Children	0:01:39	0:02:14	0:03:06	0:01:37	0:03:11	0:01:30	0:03:59	0:03:21	
Without Children	0:01:26	0:02:37	0:03:07	0:01:58	0:03:27	0:00:22	0:03:45	0:00:30	
Display	**09**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**SUM**
With Children	0:02:37	0:02:01	0:02:42	0:01:47	0:00:32	0:01:58	0:01:16	0:04:08	**0:37:39**
Without Children	0:01:58	0:02:17	0:00:21	0:01:49	0:00:52	0:01:14	0:00:51	0:04:45	**0:31:20**

Museum-Display Index:

01) Early History; 02) 'Market Town' (1830-1880); 03) 'Turn of The Century' (1881-1918); 04) Photo & Text Files; 05) 'Suburbia' (1919-1938); 06) W.W.II Anderson Shelter; 07) 'Wartime & Austerity' (1939-1955); 08) Jigsaw Puzzles; 09) Costumes & Hats; 10) 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970); 11) Dentist Chair; 12) Croydon Now' (1971-Today); 13) The Future; 14) Temporary Exhibition Area; 15) 'Walk Out In Style' (Shoes); 16) Additional Touch-Screens On Mezzanine Floor;

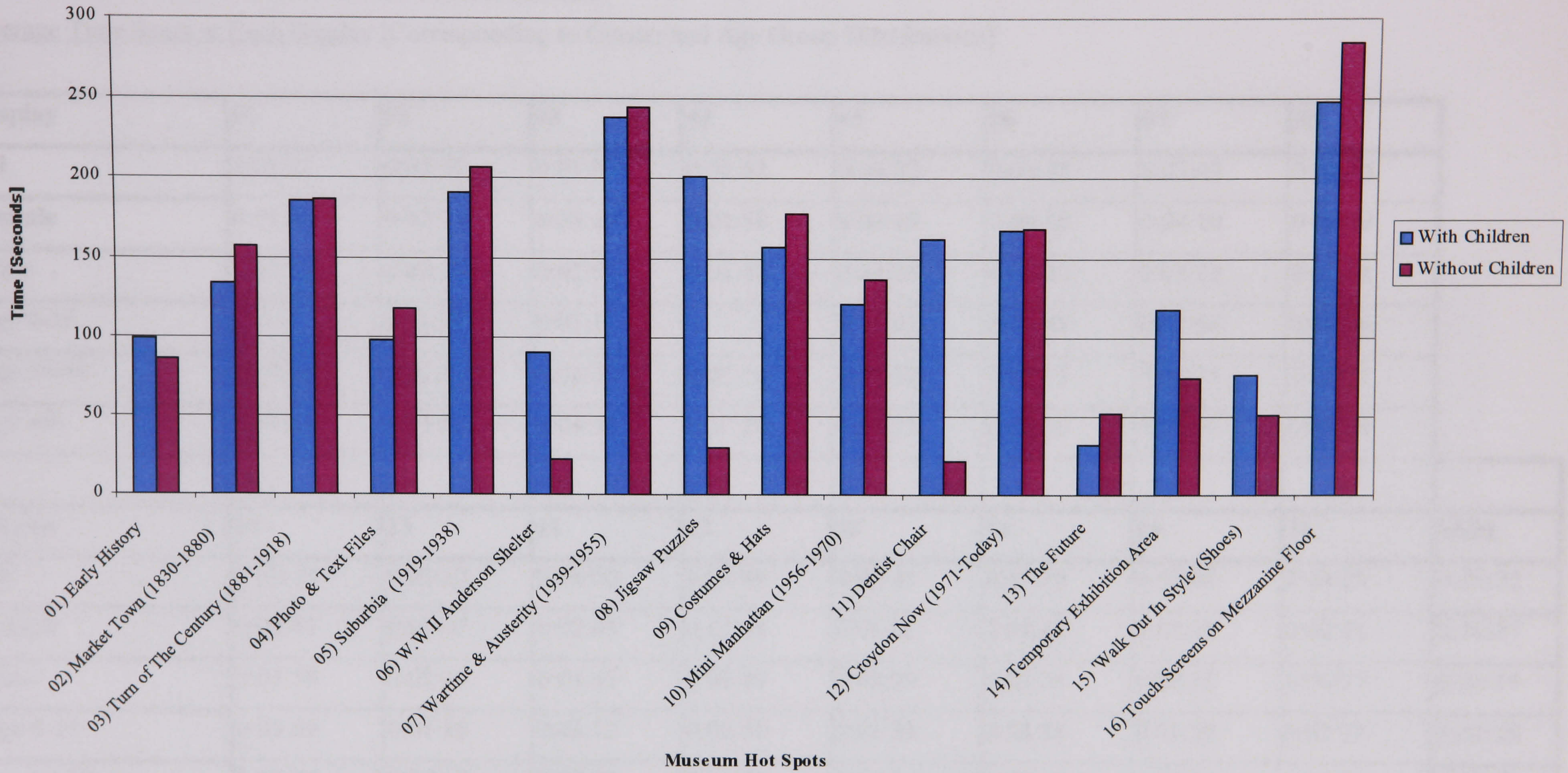

Diagram 2.10a: Museum 'Spell' - Visitors' Attention Span

Average Time Spent at Each Display [Corresponding to Adults, With / Without Children]

Data Chart 2.11: Museum 'Spell' - Visitors' Attention Span

Average Time Spent at Each Display [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Display	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
All	0:01:27	0:02:30	0:03:07	0:01:52	0:03:22	0:00:48	0:03:49	0:02:54
Female	0:01:44	0:02:21	0:03:17	0:01:59	0:03:19	0:00:50	0:04:10	0:03:09
Male	0:01:12	0:02:39	0:02:57	0:01:30	0:03:25	0:00:46	0:03:29	0:01:58
Age 0-15		0:01:07	0:01:11		0:01:41	0:01:48	0:02:44	0:04:06
Age 16-59	0:01:05	0:02:19	0:02:39	0:01:18	0:03:02	0:00:45	0:03:35	0:02:31
Age 60+	0:01:34	0:03:02	0:04:14	0:02:20	0:04:22	0:00:29	0:04:37	0:05:02

Display	09	13	11	12	13	14	15	16	SUM
All	0:02:33	0:02:12	0:02:00	0:01:48	0:00:46	0:01:29	0:01:09	0:04:29	**0:36:32**
Female	0:02:41	0:02:07	0:02:03	0:01:48	0:01:02	0:01:43	0:01:11	0:02:41	**0:36:07**
Male	0:01:58	0:02:16	0:01:47	0:01:49	0:00:29	0:00:55	0:00:52	0:06:17	**0:34:19**
Age 0-15	0:03:09	0:01:16	0:03:12	0:00:51	0:01:38	0:03:28	0:01:50	0:03:25	**0:31:25**
Age 16-59	0:02:25	0:02:17	0:02:07	0:01:50	0:00:34	0:01:42	0:00:54	0:03:28	**0:32:30**
Age 60+	0:02:08	0:02:11	0:00:31	0:01:50	0:01:02	0:00:56	0:01:28	0:10:53	**0:46:40**

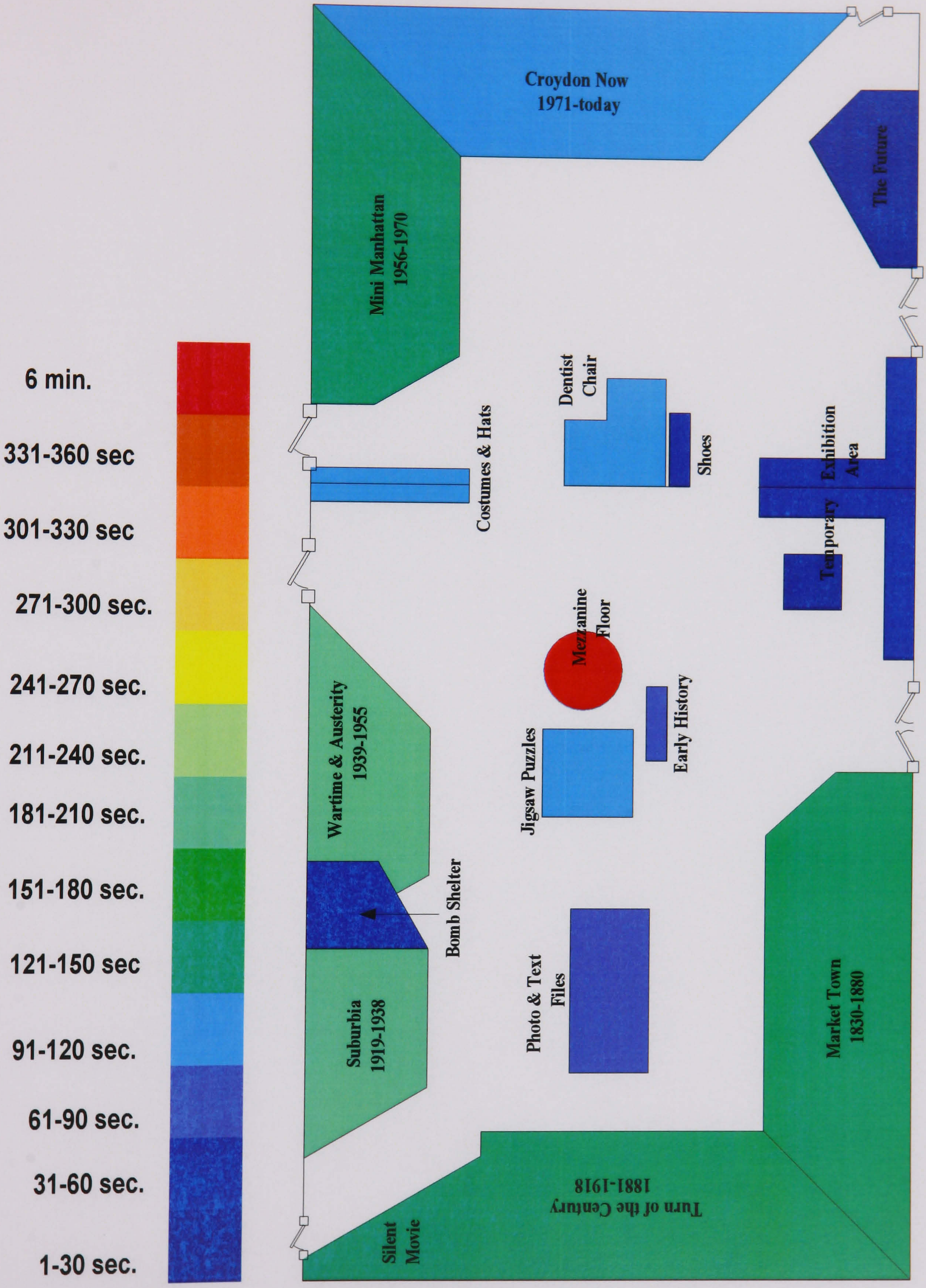

Diagram 2.11a: Museum 'Spell' Map - Male Visitors' Attention Span

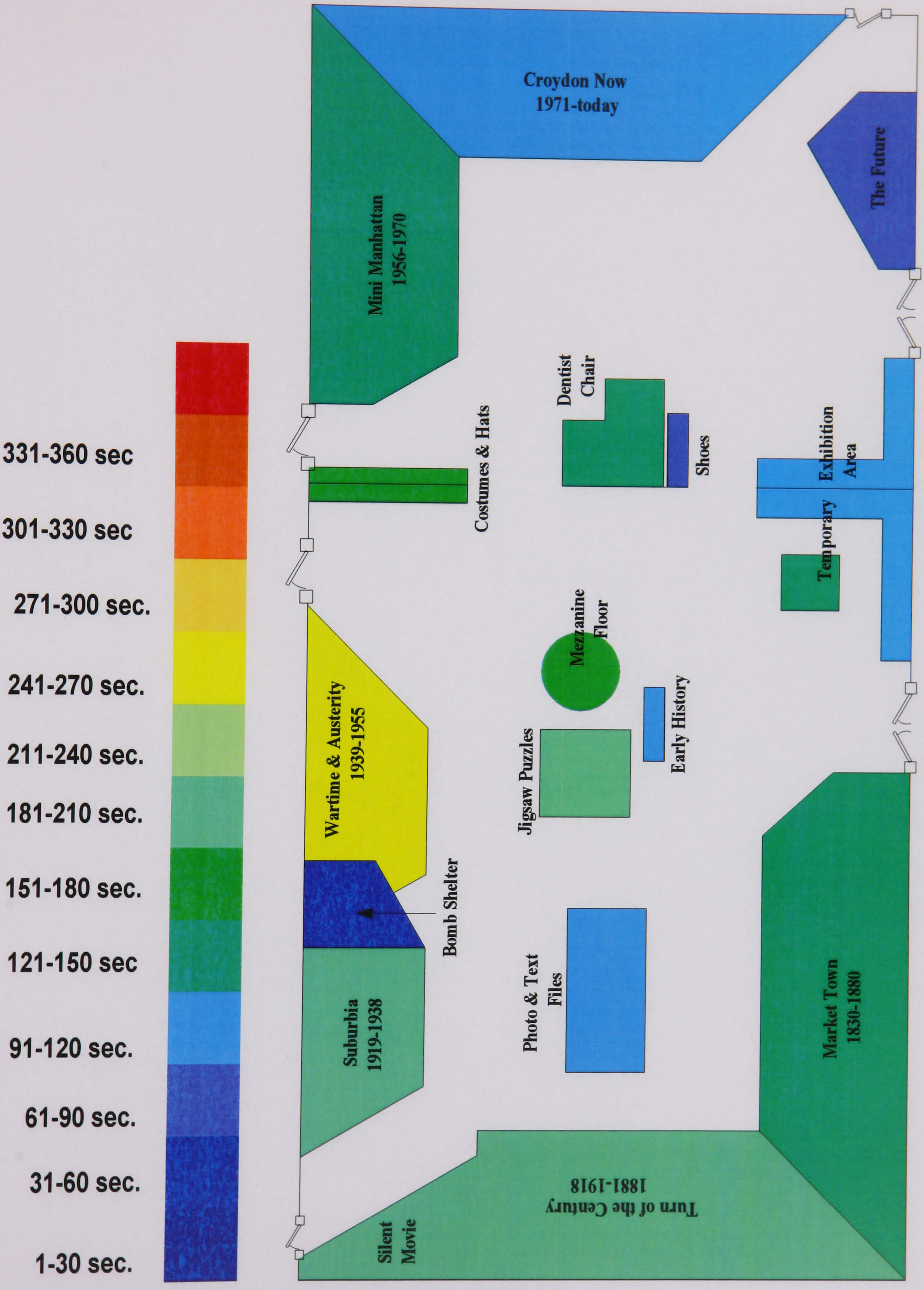

Diagram 2.11b: Museum 'Spell' Map - Female Visitors' Attention Span

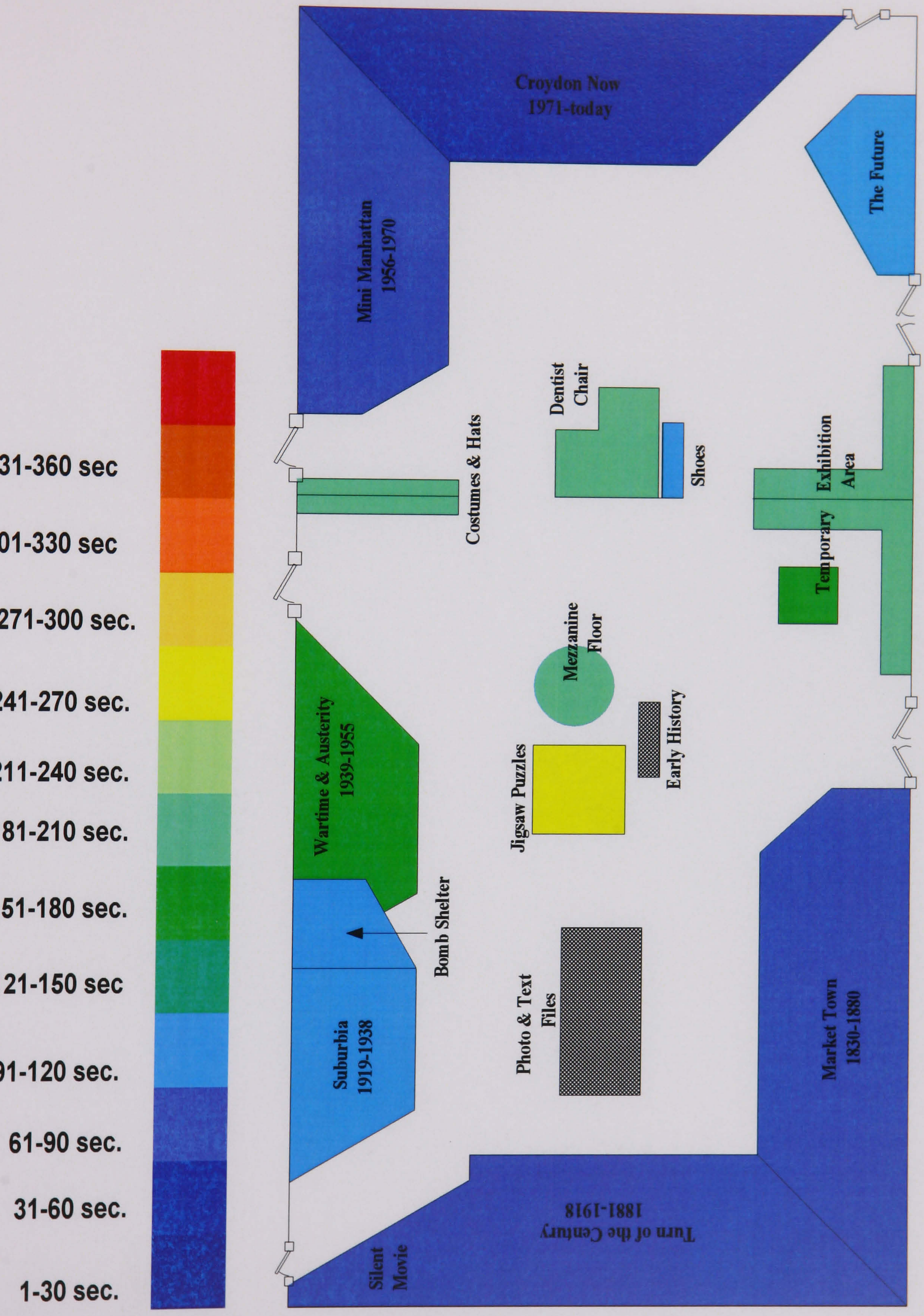

Diagram 2.11c: Museum 'Spell' Map - Young Visitors' Attention Span

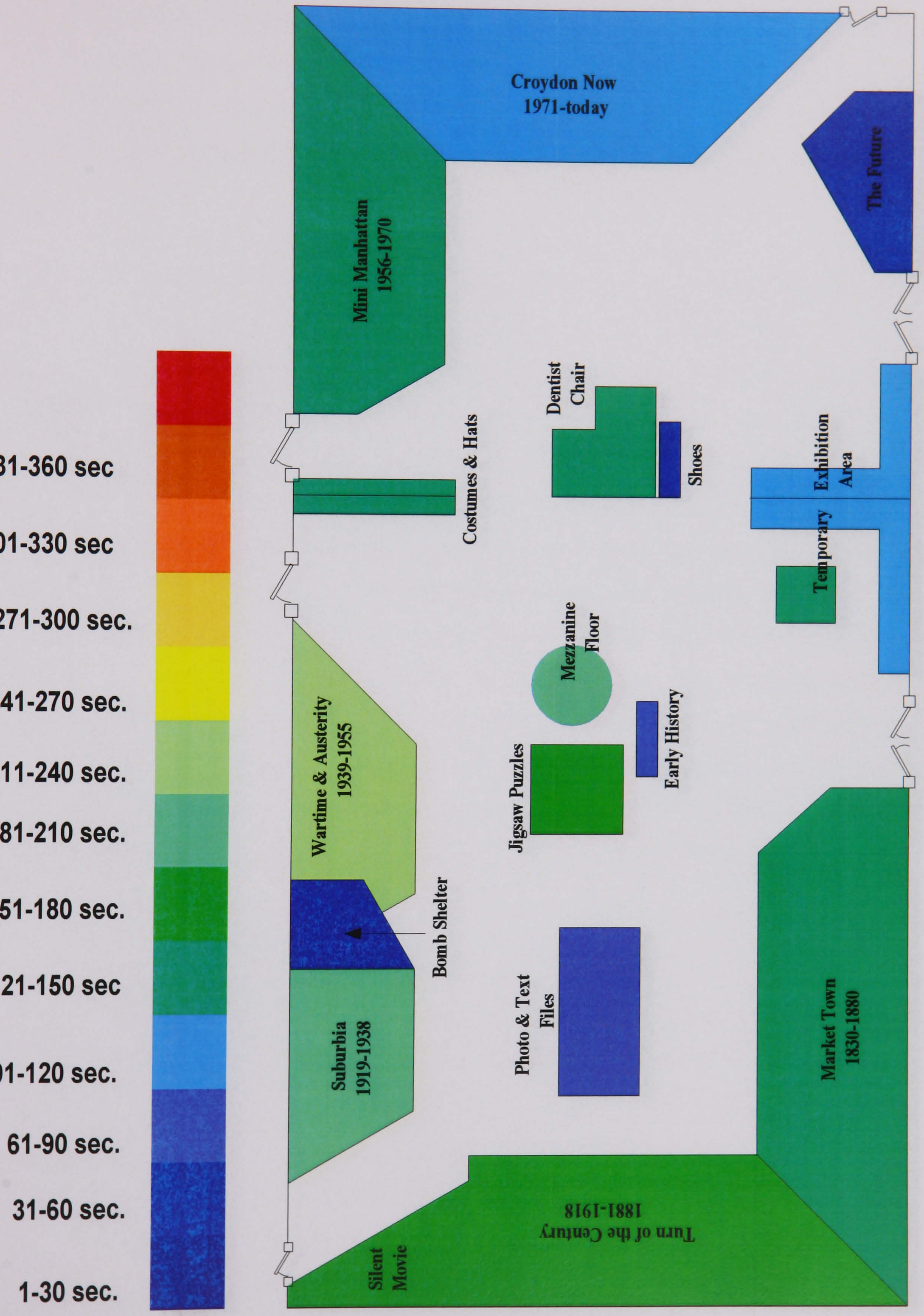

Diagram 2.11d: Museum 'Spell' Map - Adult Visitors' Attention Span

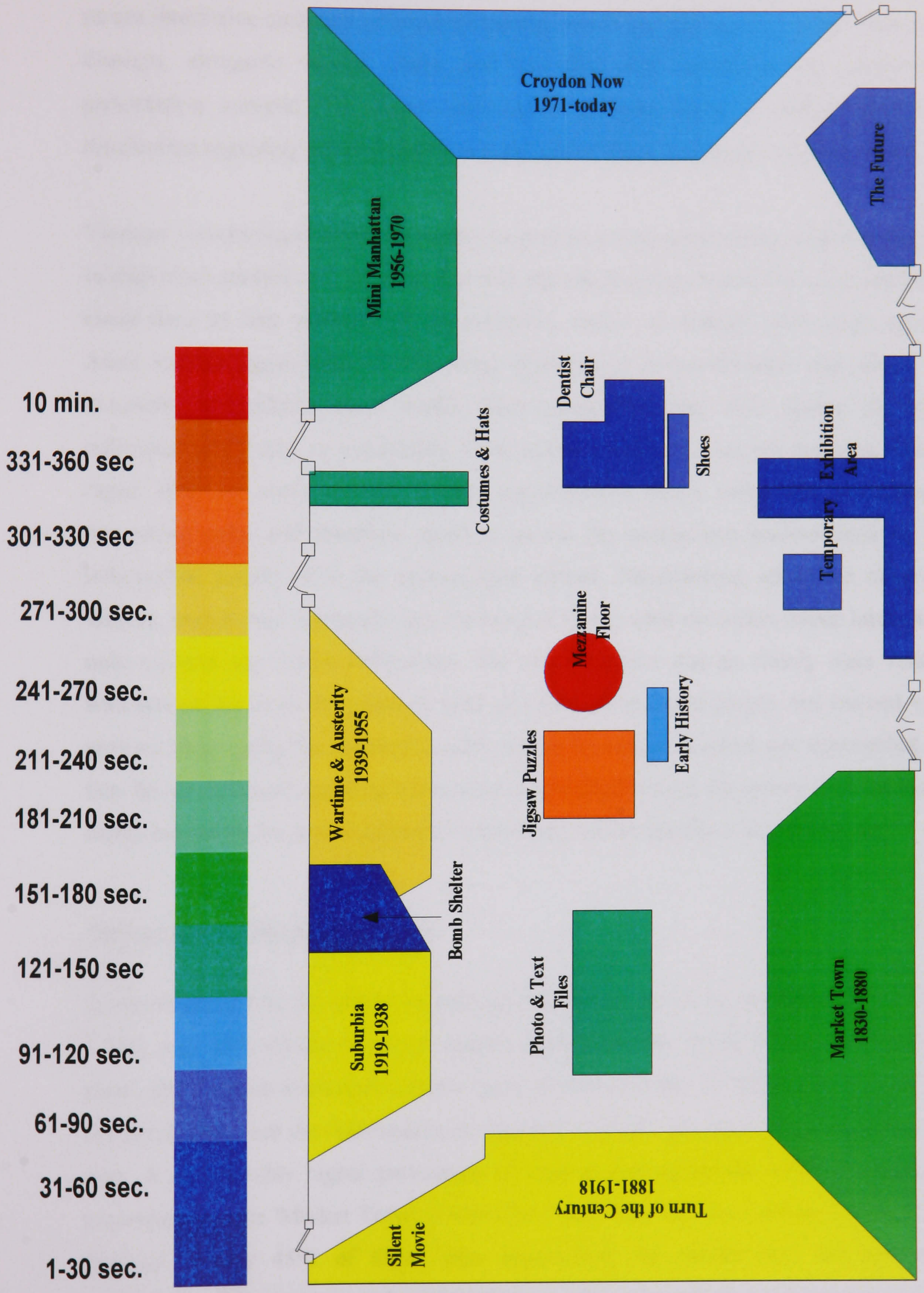

Diagram 2.11e: Museum 'Spell' Map - Elderly Visitors' Attention Span

Museum Information Access

The *Lifetimes* museum offers a variety of information-access means, including touch-screen interactive units and information panels, which accompany each of the museum's displays, alongside various photo and text files that summarise the multimedia presentation material. The visitor observation sessions reveal a distinct age-group distribution regarding visitors' preference and use of these information-access media.

Younger visitors (aged fifteen or under), as well as young-adult visitors (aged sixteen to twenty-nine) seemed very comfortable with the touch-screen interactive units and often chose them as their principal, if not exclusive, means of museum information access. Adult visitors (aged thirty to fifty-nine) appeared to be comfortable with all of the museum's information-access media. They seemed to base their choice on either individual preference, or availability. Conversely, a number of elderly museum visitors (aged sixty or over) seemed slightly apprehensive about using the touch-screen interactive units, and therefore opted to access the written-text presentations on the information panels, or in the various files instead. Nevertheless, all of the observed visitors, except one, eventually 'got the hang of it' and used the touch-screen interactive units without any visible difficulties. The one exception was an elderly male visitor, who was on his own. He carefully read all of the information panels, but seemed very anxious about using the interactive units, which he neither touched, nor approached. In fact, he did not touch anything whatsoever. He walked around the gallery with his hands firmly behind his back throughout his entire visit, which lasted for 22:55 minutes.

Visitors' Use of Information Panels

As demonstrated by the statistical analysis [see Data Chart 2.12, and Diagrams 2.12a - 2.12b] only 19% of the observed visitors approached the 'Early History' information panel, all of whom were adult visitors (aged sixteen or over). Of those who approached the panel, 79% read the information, as opposed to briefly gazing at the panel's title and map. A considerably higher percentage of visitors approached the information panels accompanying the 'Market Town' (1830-1880) and 'Turn Of The Century' (1881-1918) displays. Nearly 45% of those who approached the panels read the presented information, and approximately 40% of those who approached the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) and 'War & Austerity' (1939-1955) display panels stopped to read them.

30% of the visitors who approached the 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970) and 'Croydon Now' (1971-today) displays read the panels, and 35% of the visitors who approached the temporary exhibition space read the display's information panel. This final figure reflects the unique circumstances created during the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition, which balanced the typical visitor dynamics in regard to the temporary exhibition area. Normally, very few visitors would approach this area and read the presented material. However, during the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition every one of the observed visitors who approached the display stopped to read the information panel. This, combined, figure then represents the *average* visitor use of information panels in the temporary exhibition area, before, during and after the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition.

Overall, visitors often seemed to ignore, or briefly glance at the information panels, rather than actually read them. However, elderly visitors (aged sixty or over) seemed to be more thorough in their visit patterns and almost always approached the information panels, visibly reading the presented material. Younger visitors (aged fifteen or under) on the other hand, seemed to seldom read the presented information, with the exception of the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition. Instead, they briefly glanced at the panel and moved on to use the interactive unit.

Having said that, McManus's examination (1989a) of label reading among museum visitors demonstrates the possible partiality of such results - "Reading is difficult to observe visually. The average literate human being processes print at the rate of 250 to 350 words per minute; a visitor can read 20 words or more in five seconds while walking toward an exhibit... If you sit in a museum and watch people walking about and stopping at exhibits, it does look as if not much reading and a lot of looking or playing at interactive exhibits is going on. Casual observation elicits the intuitive response that exhibits' texts are largely ignored... [However] "Not seen to read" and "not conscious of reading" do not necessarily mean that reading has not taken place..." (McManus, 1989a: 186-187).

Visitors' Use of Touch-Screen Units

As evident from both the qualitative and quantitative material, an overwhelming majority of the observed visitors, who approached the period displays, used the interactive units as their principal means of information access [see Data Chart 2.13 and Diagram 2.13a].

Many visitors accessed the exhibition section, as well as the stories section, however the most popular feature was the quiz. All of the observed visitors, regardless of their age or gender, who chose the quiz option on the interactive unit, seemed to enjoy it and went on choosing this option, again and again, at all of the subsequent displays they approached. A possible reason for the quiz's remarkable popularity may lay in its ability to make visitors truly active and in-control of their museum experience. The quiz may also be answering deeper needs, by providing both a challenge and a means of examining the level of your knowledge. Museum visiting in this regard can be seen as an act of re-evaluating and re-affirming what and how much we know. Furthermore, the quiz provides immediate feedback and 'reward' (in the behaviourist sense) along with an outlet for competitiveness and a framework for interaction between the visitor and other members of their visitor group, especially between adults and children. The quiz enabled visitors to play, compete, communicate, and explore as a family. It seemed to empower whoever was in command of the knowledge and the technology, yet it was rarely perceived as threatening for those who were not. Visitors often 'communicated' with the computer, responding (verbally) to its remarks on their performance. Unsurprisingly, young visitors were far less inhibited than the escorting adults in their visitor group.

Visitors' Use of Text & Photo Files

Very few of the observed visitors used the 'photo & text' files. Only eighteen (out of one hundred) approached the central settee, where the files are located. Fifteen of them actually read the files, and three ignored them completely and simply took advantage of an opportunity to sit down [see Data Chart 2.14 ad Diagram 2.14a]. Four of the eighteen visitors who approached the central settee were male and fourteen were female; Eleven were elderly visitors (aged sixty or over) and seven were adult visitors (aged sixteen to fifty-nine); None were aged fifteen or under. The 'photo & text' files were read by ten of the elderly visitors, but only five of the adult visitors.

Data Chart 2.12: Museum Information Access

Visitors' Use of Information Panels [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Display		01	02	03	05	07	10	12	14
Overall	**Read**	78.9%	44.0%	45.8%	40.5%	40.0%	31.1%	29.4%	35.4%
	Glance	21.1%	29.3%	31.9%	30.4%	27.5%	29.7%	35.3%	47.9%
	Ignore	0%	26.7%	22.2%	29.1%	32.5%	39.2%	35.3%	16.7%
Female	**Read**	88.9%	42.1%	48.6%	38.1%	42.5%	38.2%	37.5%	41.2%
	Glance	11.1%	36.8%	40.0%	35.7%	30.0%	23.5%	28.1%	44.1%
	Ignore	0%	21.1%	11.4%	26.2%	27.5%	38.2%	34.4%	14.7%
Male	**Read**	70.0%	45.9%	43.2%	43.2%	37.5%	25.0%	22.2%	21.4%
	Glance	30.0%	21.6%	24.3%	24.3%	25.0%	35.0%	41.7%	57.1%
	Ignore	0%	32.4%	32.4%	32.4%	37.5%	40.0%	36.1%	21.4%
Age 0-15	**Read**	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%
	Glance	0%	33.3%	33.3%	20.0%	16.7%	0%	0%	0%
	Ignore	100.0%	66.7%	66.7%	80.0%	83.3%	100.0%	100.0%	0%
Age 16-59	**Read**	50.0%	25.0%	26.7%	18.4%	20.0%	10.6%	11.6%	39.3%
	Glance	50.0%	39.6%	42.2%	44.9%	40.0%	38.3%	39.5%	42.9%
	Ignore	0%	35.4%	31.1%	36.7%	40.0%	51.1%	48.8%	17.9%

Display		01	02	03	05	07	10	12	14
Age 60+	Read	92.3%	87.5%	87.5%	92.0%	91.7%	78.3%	65.2%	22.2%
	Glance	7.7%	8.3%	12.5%	4.0%	4.2%	17.4%	30.4%	61.1%
	Ignore	0%	4.2%	0%	4.0%	4.2%	4.3%	4.3%	16.7%

Museum-Display Index:

01) Early History; 02) 'Market Town' (1830-1880); 03) 'Turn of The Century' (1881-1918); 04) Photo & Text Files; 05) 'Suburbia' (1919-1938); 06) W.W.II Anderson Shelter; 07) 'Wartime & Austerity' (1939-1955); 08) Jigsaw Puzzles; 09) Costumes & Hats; 10) 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970); 11) Dentist Chair; 12) Croydon Now' (1971-Today); 13) The Future; 14) Temporary Exhibition Area; 15) 'Walk Out In Style' (Shoes); 16) Additional Touch-Screens On Mezzanine Floor;

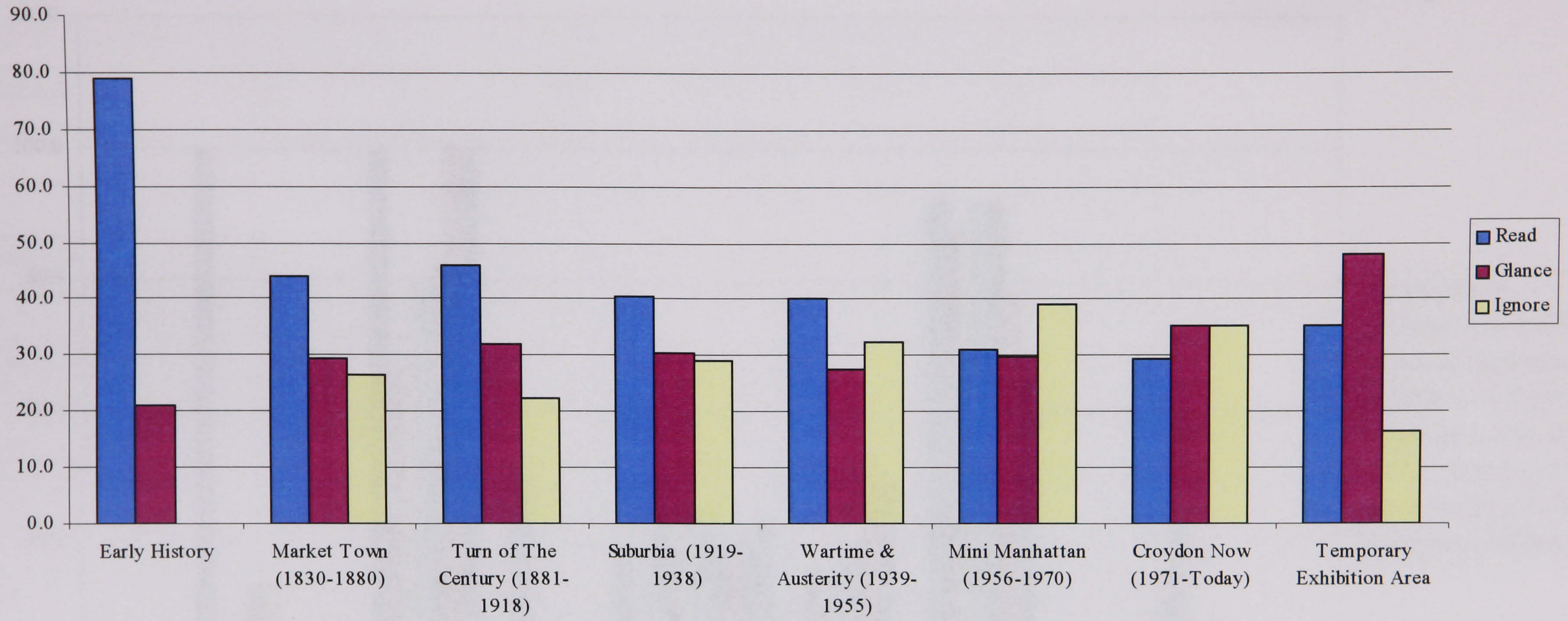

Diagram 2.12a: Museum Information Access

Visitors' Use of Information Panels [Overall Distributions]

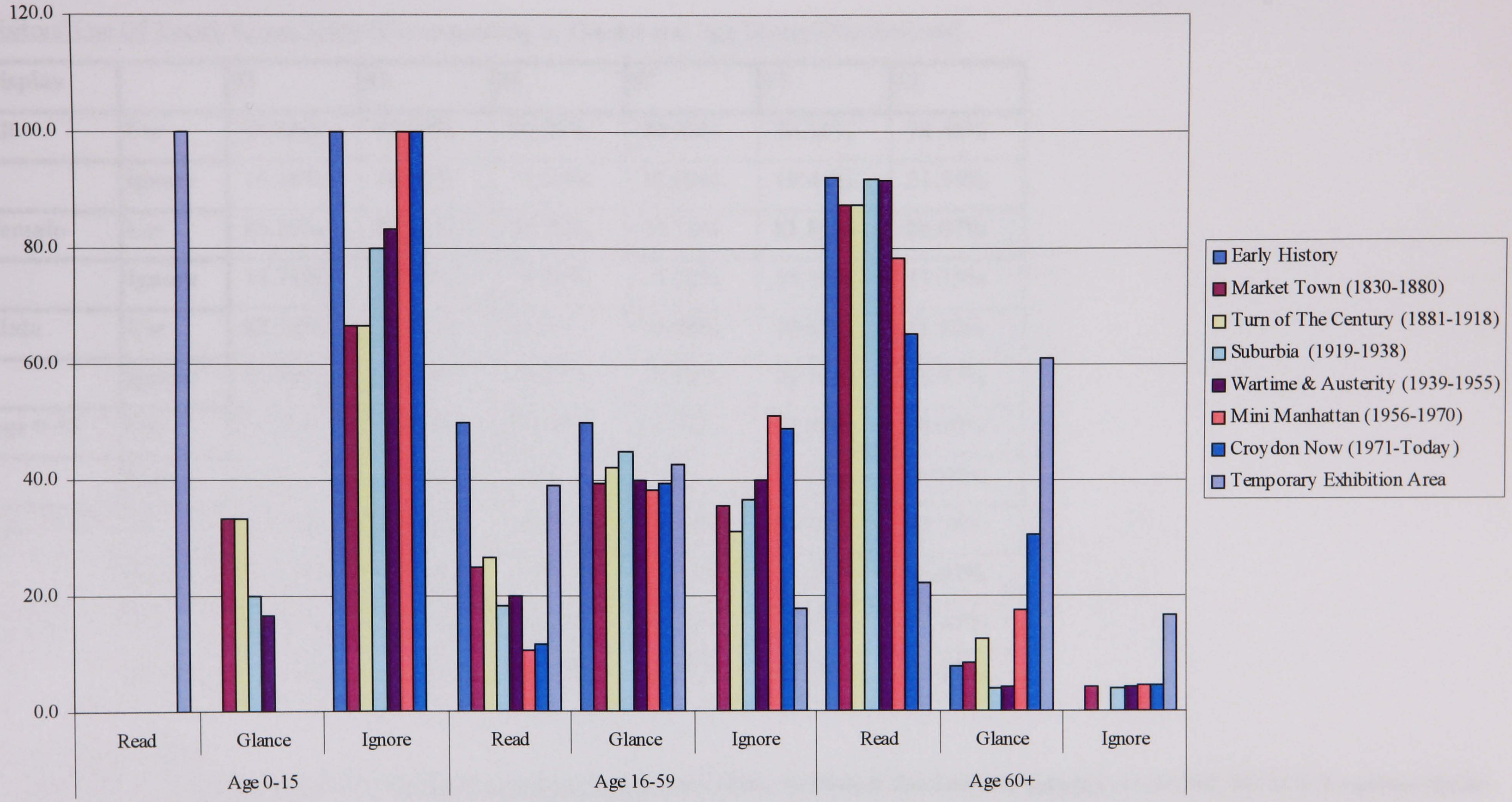

Diagram 2.12b: Museum Information Access: Visitors' Use of Information Panels [Age Group Distributions]

Data Chart 2.13: Museum Information Access

Visitors' Use Of Touch-Screen Units [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Display		02	03	05	07	10	12
All	Use	83.82%	83.58%	90.79%	88.00%	80.56%	78.46%
	Ignore	16.18%	16.42%	9.21%	12.00%	19.44%	21.54%
Female	Use	85.29%	87.88%	97.50%	94.74%	81.82%	86.67%
	Ignore	14.71%	12.12%	2.50%	5.26%	18.18%	13.33%
Male	Use	82.35%	79.41%	83.33%	81.08%	79.49%	71.43%
	Ignore	17.65%	20.59%	16.67%	18.92%	20.51%	28.57%
Age 0-15	Use	100.00%	50.00%	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%	50.00%
	Ignore	0%	50.00%	0%	0%	25.00%	50.00%
Age 16-59	Use	84.09%	85.71%	93.75%	91.49%	84.44%	83.33%
	Ignore	15.91%	14.29%	6.25%	8.51%	15.56%	16.67%
Age 60+	Use	81.82%	82.61%	83.33%	78.26%	73.91%	71.43%
	Ignore	18.18%	17.39%	16.67%	21.74%	26.09%	28.57%

Museum-Display Index:

01) Early History; 02) 'Market Town' (1830-1880); 03) 'Turn of The Century' (1881-1918); 04) Photo & Text Files; 05) 'Suburbia' (1919-1938); 06) W.W.II Anderson Shelter; 07) 'Wartime & Austerity' (1939-1955); 08) Jigsaw Puzzles; 09) Costumes & Hats; 10) 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970); 11) Dentist Chair; 12) Croydon Now' (1971-Today); 13) The Future; 14) Temporary Exhibition Area; 15) 'Walk Out In Style' (Shoes); 16) Additional Touch-Screens On Mezzanine Floor;

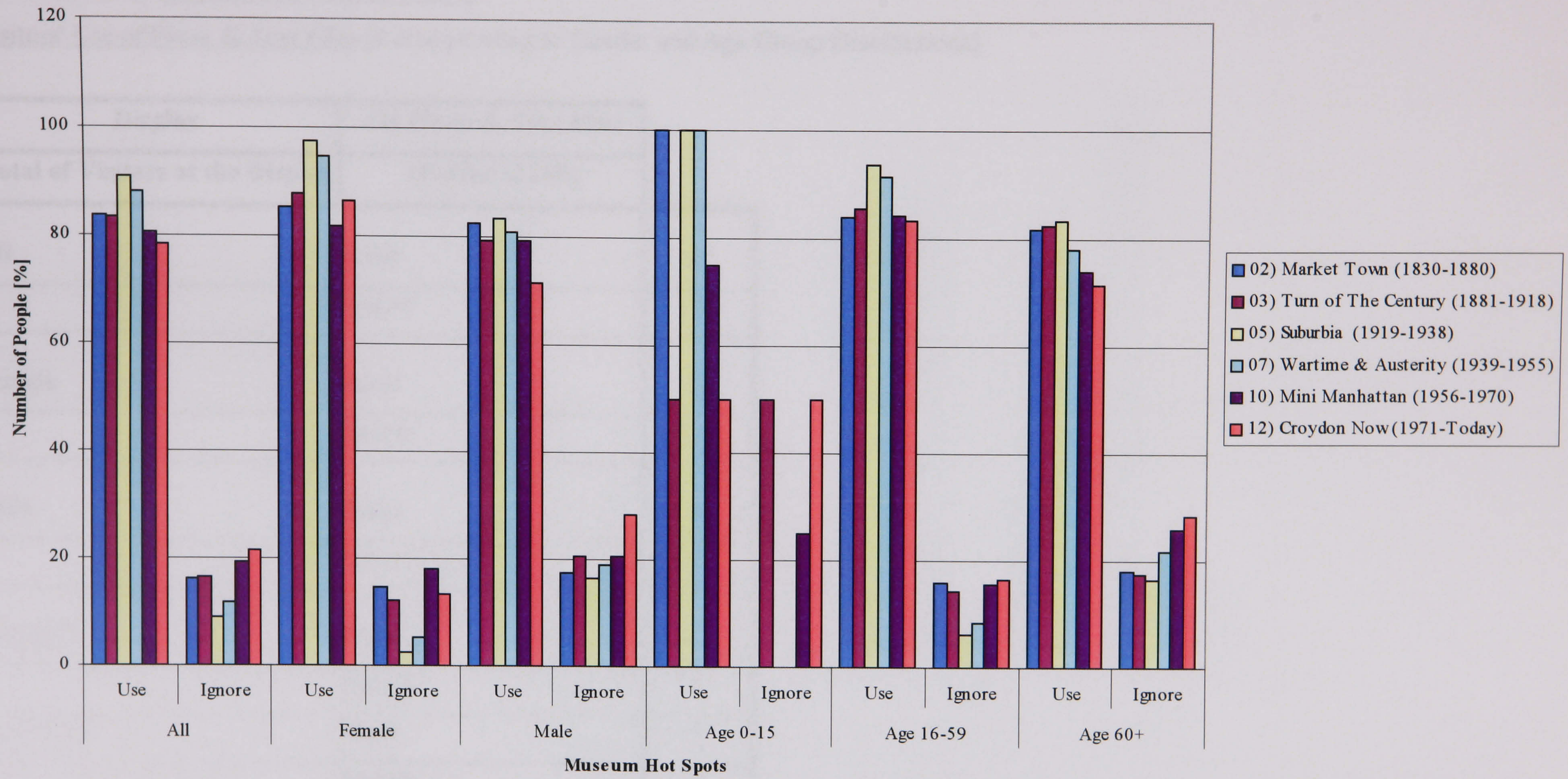

Diagram 2.13a: Museum Information Access

Visitors' Use of Touch-Screen Units [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Data Chart 2.14: Museum Information Access

Visitors' Use of Photo & Text Files [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Display	**04) Photo & Text Files**	
Total of Visitors at the Display	**15 (Out of 100)**	
All	Read	15
	Ignore	3
Female	Read	12
	Ignore	2
Male	Read	3
	Ignore	1
Age 0-15	Read	0
	Ignore	0
Age 16-59	Read	5
	Ignore	2
Age 60+	Read	10
	Ignore	1

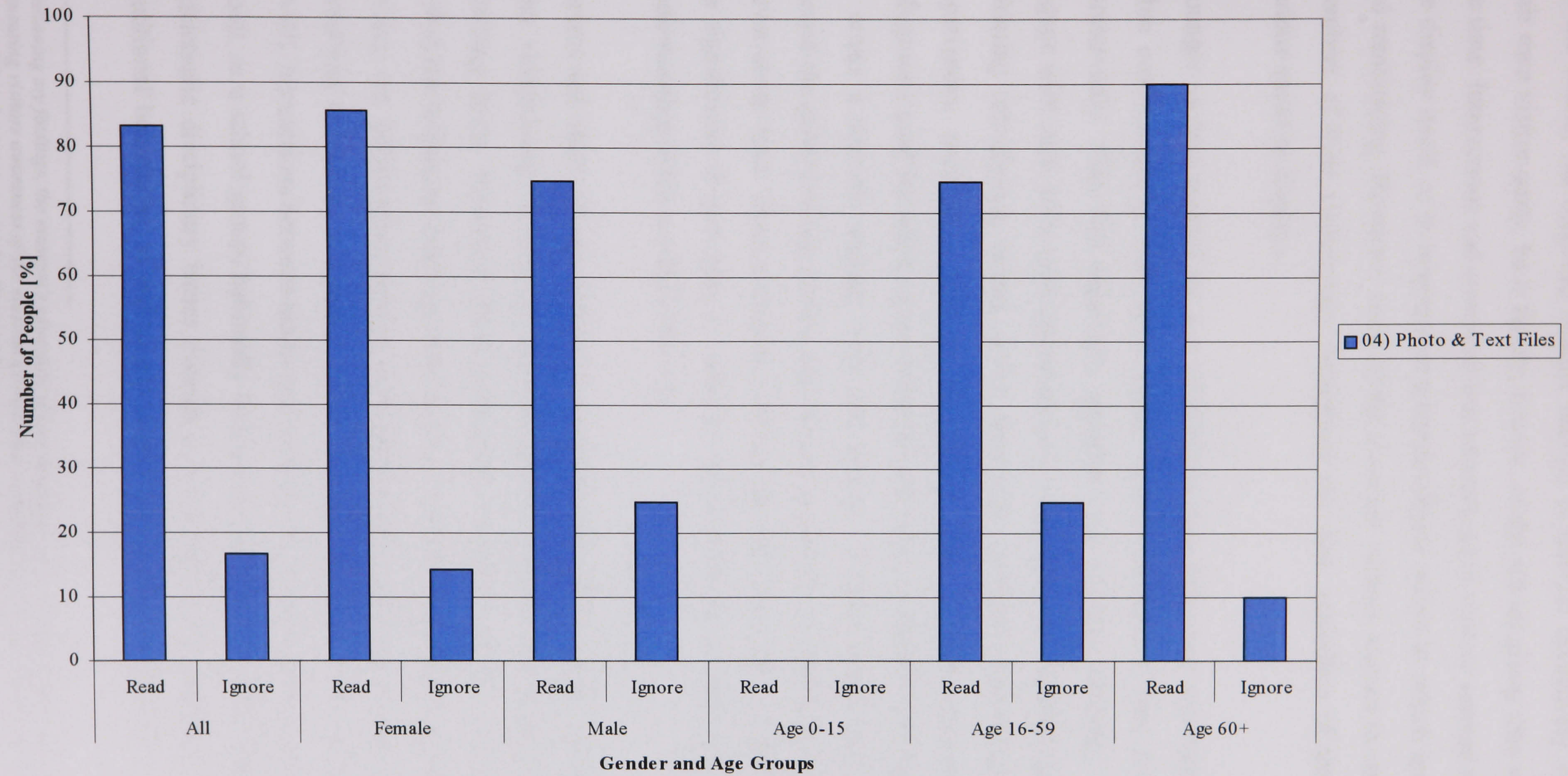

Diagram 2.14a: Museum Information Access

Visitors' Use of Photo & Text Files [Corresponding to Gender and Age Group Distributions]

Visitor Group Interactions

On the whole, the observed visitors seemed to interact exclusively with members of their own visitor-party, be it family, friends, or the school group they were escorting at the time. Interactions and conversations between adult visitors seemed to be inspired by the display itself, or in response to a certain object within it, which invoked memories and reminiscing. However, some of the observed visitors seemed to communicate with members of their visitor-party throughout the visit, regardless of the content of the various museum displays.

Younger visitors seemed far less inhibited in their behaviour and interaction patterns, often communicating with other young visitors (outside of their own visitor-party) unreservedly. This was especially apparent with younger children, who seemed to engage with each other quite spontaneously, exploring and playing together, as well as initiating role-playing games, which frequently included dressing-up and acting-out experiences, such as a visit to the dentist. One of these spontaneously formed playgroups used the spare chairs under the staircase, combined with the dentist's chair, to create a dentist's waiting room and surgery. Another spontaneous playgroup ran around the gallery in big circles, their hands spread out, pretending they were flying to 'never-never' land. These examples reinforce Hein & Alexander's (1998) emphasis upon the significance of peer play in children, which provides a means of confirming their understanding of the world (1998: 19).

Parents and older siblings willingly engaged in role-play with the younger members of their visitor-party, as long as they thought the gallery was empty and no one was watching them. However, their interaction normally centred upon what Diamond (1986) has termed as 'teaching behaviours', including pointing out exhibits; describing; reading out information; raising (and answering) questions; giving family members something to look at, or a task to do, and so on (Diamond, 1986, in: McManus, 1994: 89-90). Interactions between adults and children in the same visitor-party (be it a family group, or a school group) habitually focused on disciplinary matters as well. The most problematic disciplinary issues seemed to be linked to the museum's visible lack of 'traditional' boundaries, as well as any kind of 'prohibiting' signage [3].

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[3] *Following my findings, the museum's education officer developed several cartoon-like signs for the museum, aimed at ensuring visitors awareness of the museum's boundaries, as well as its special services, such as hearing aids, extra chairs, a lift to the upper mezzanine-floor, and so on.*

Because the *Lifetimes* museum has such an unusual setting, which is very different from the conventional 'hands off', glass-case museum-display, visitors seemed somewhat confused as to what they could and could not do, as well as what they could and could not touch. Consequently, many of the observed adult visitors either prohibited their children from touching anything, or placed no restrictions on them whatsoever, in which case the child often climbed over the low red-bards framing the display area, thereby triggering the alarm.

Museum Routes

The diverse 'museum routes' chosen by the observed visitors as they explored the displays [see Diagrams 2.15a - 2.15e] appeared to be dependent upon both gender and age. The latter in particular seemed to have generated a distinct distribution in the visitors' ordering and sequencing of their visit.

Young visitors (aged fifteen or under) frequently followed non-linear 'museum routes' - 'hopping' from one presentation to the next, in accordance with whatever caught their attention, or (if they had visited the museum before) heading directly towards their favourite displays and activity areas [see Diagram 2.15a]. While adult visitors (aged sixteen and fifty-nine, who were not accompanying children), as well as elderly visitors (aged sixty or over, who were not accompanying children) habitually followed an orderly, chronological 'route' round the gallery [see Diagrams 2.15b and 2.15c].

The gender distribution in this regard was particularly apparent in the younger visitors' museum 'Snail Trails', and especially among school-age children, as demonstrated in the first 'Museum Routes Map' [see Diagram 2.15a].

School-age boys (whose predominant 'Snail Trail' is represented by the blue arrow) often began their 'museum tour' at their favourite *Lifetimes* display - the World War II bomb shelter. From there they customarily continued to the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938) and the 'War and Austerity' (1939-1955) displays, focusing mainly on playing the quiz. This non-chronological order may well indicate their level of interest and preference.

School-age girls (whose predominant 'Snail Trail' is represented by the red arrow) often began their 'museum tour' at their favourite *Lifetimes* displays, namely the shoes display and the costumes display (this was especially evident during the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition). From there they often joined the boys at the 'Suburbia' (1919-1938), and the 'War & Austerity' (1939-1955) displays, focusing mainly on playing the quiz. Again this non-chronological order may indicate their level of interest and preference. Both the observed school-age boys, and school-age girls often finished their 'museum tour' at the interactive units upstairs, where they routinely spent a substantial amount of their overall visiting time. These gender-dependent differences seem to 'fade out', to some extent, with the adult visitors. However, on average, adult female visitors stopped to look at the shoes and costumes display, whereas adult male visitors often 'skipped' them altogether [see the corresponding, blue and red arrows in Diagrams 2.15b and 2.15c].

Adult female-visitors (in particular mothers accompanying young children, and older female-visitors) tended to make more use of the central settee, though they rarely used the photo and text files that were on display in that area. Adult male-visitors often included the silent movie section in their 'museum route', more so than the adult female-visitors, who frequently omitted that display. Other than that, the observed adult visitors, male and female alike, typically followed very similar, linear 'museum routes' in, chronological order [see Diagrams 2.15b, 2.15c and 2.15d].

The only circumstances under which adult visitors did not follow a chronological path round the museum were: (1) When *Lifetimes* was very crowded, in which case visitors often preferred to find a vacant corner, in which they could access an interactive unit on their own.

(2) When they were accompanying children, be it school groups, or family members, in which case visitors often gave-in to the children's more sporadic 'museum routes', in accordance with the child's dominance [see the corresponding, blue and red arrows, presented in Diagram 2.15d]. It is also vital to take into consideration the child's age, as younger children have different interests and preferences to older children, and therefore generate different 'museum routes' than the school-age children do [see the corresponding, blue, red and green arrows, presented in Diagram 2.15d].

Another such occasion, which created a different 'museum route' than normally chosen by adult visitors took place during the 'half term' break. A visitor-party, comprising of two grandparents accompanying their two grandchildren, came into *Lifetimes*. The children, who appeared to have visited the museum before, rushed into the gallery, leading their grandparents towards their favourite exhibitions, namely the World War II Anderson Shelter and the 'War and Austerity' (1939-1955) display. After a short while, the grandparents seemed to realise that *Lifetimes* was intended for adults as well as children, and that some of the displays would be of interest to them. Consequently, they altered their joined 'museum route' so that one grandparent went on with the children, while the other 'backtracked' (in reverse chronological order) round the gallery, to see some of the earlier historical displays.

A similar visiting-pattern choice, of following a chronological 'route' in reverse order, customarily reoccurred during the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition. Many of the observed visitors during that time, came in especially for the temporary display. Consequently, their typical 'starting point' was on the right hand side of the *Lifetimes* gallery, instead of the habitual left hand side. As a result the visitors walked round the gallery, staring at the 'Future' display and proceeding 'backwards in time' to the earlier periods [see the green arrow, presented in Diagram 2.15e].

Another, unusual 'museum route', that was particular to the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition period, was formed by visitors who came to see the temporary display, but were not interested in exploring the other, permanent, *Lifetimes* displays. These visitors remained exclusively in the temporary exhibition area, apart from a few female visitors who crossed over to the 'Suburbia' display area to read the story section about the locally resident artist Cicely Mary Barker [see the corresponding, blue and red arrows, presented in Diagram 2.15e].

Analysing the diverse 'museum routes' chosen by *Lifetimes'* viewers would not be complete without addressing the museum's additional 'category of viewers' - its staff members. Observing and recording the daily 'Snail Trails' chosen by these 'recurring museum-viewers' has revealed equally interesting patterns. While showing visitors round *Lifetimes*, the staff's 'museum routes' were almost identical to those of the observed adult visitors, inasmuch as they followed a clear, ascending, chronological order, beginning with the earliest historical displays [see blue arrow in Diagram 2.15f].

However, when the observed members of staff were not accompanying guests, nor researching a specific object, or story for an upcoming museum event, their 'museum routes' were dramatically different [see the red arrows, presented in Diagram 2.15f]. They often walked (and at times rushed) directly through the museum-space to their 'back of house' office-space, occasionally casting a fleeting look around the gallery. Macdonald (1993) makes a similar observation in her study of cultural production at the Science Museum, in London. "When I carried out participant-observation with museum staff, I noticed that most staff, particularly curators, walk very fast, especially through galleries. While there are no doubt good reasons for this, it seems to me that one way of improving exhibitions would be to ensure that those who make them do find ways of spending time simply observing and listening in exhibitions..." (Macdonald, 1993, in: Bicknell & Farmelo, 1993: 78).

The following 'Museum Routes Maps' [Diagrams 2.15a - 2.15f] show the viewers' predominant 'Snail Trails' round the *Lifetimes* museum, comparing different types of museum viewers, as well as different age and gender groups. The maps also enable a comparison between viewers' museum visiting patterns during typical, everyday circumstances, and during special events, such as the temporary *'Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies'* Exhibition.

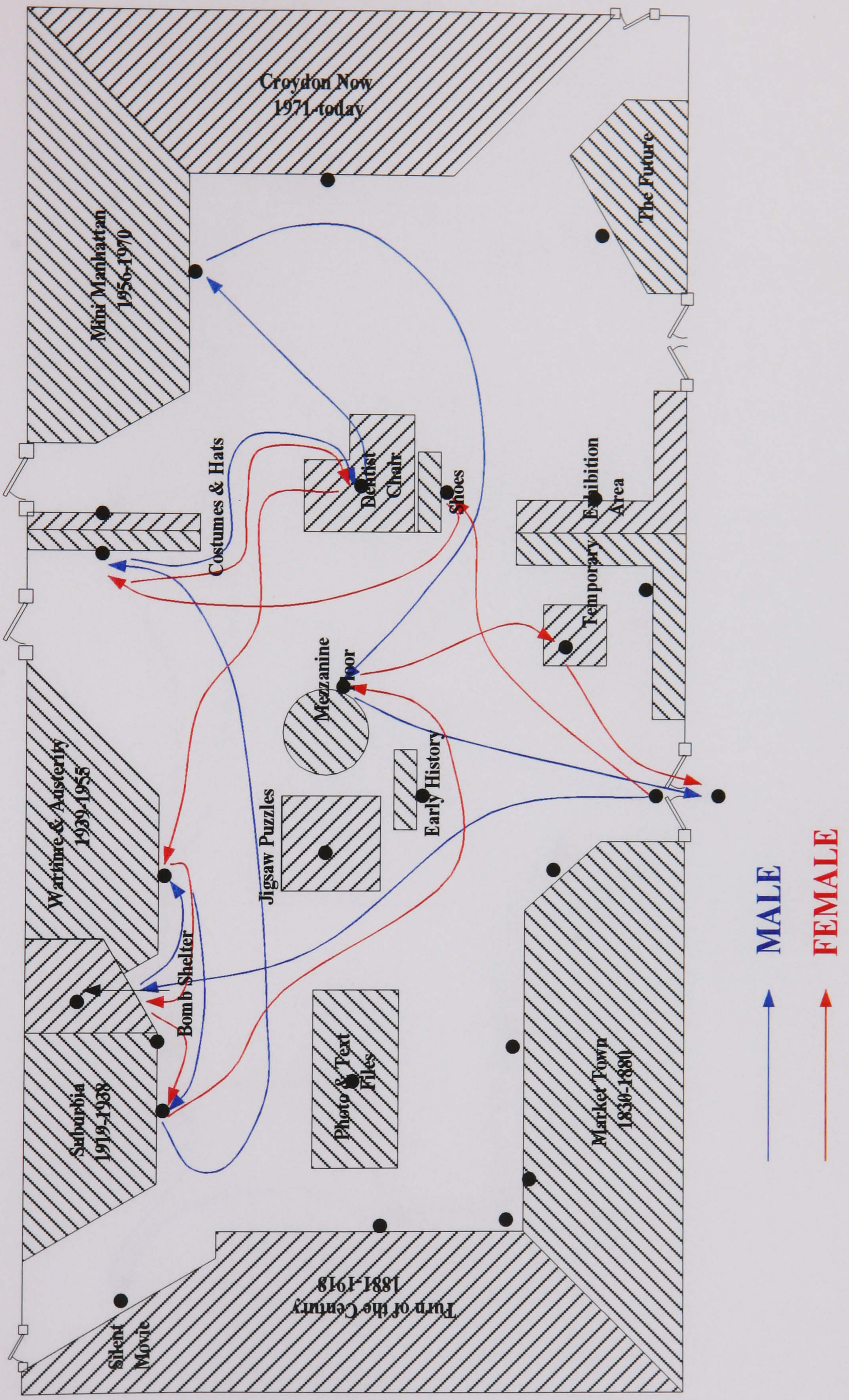

Diagram 2.15a: Museum 'Routes' Map –

Young Visitors' 'Snail Trails'

[Arrows show the predominant route for each category - from the overall observations per category]

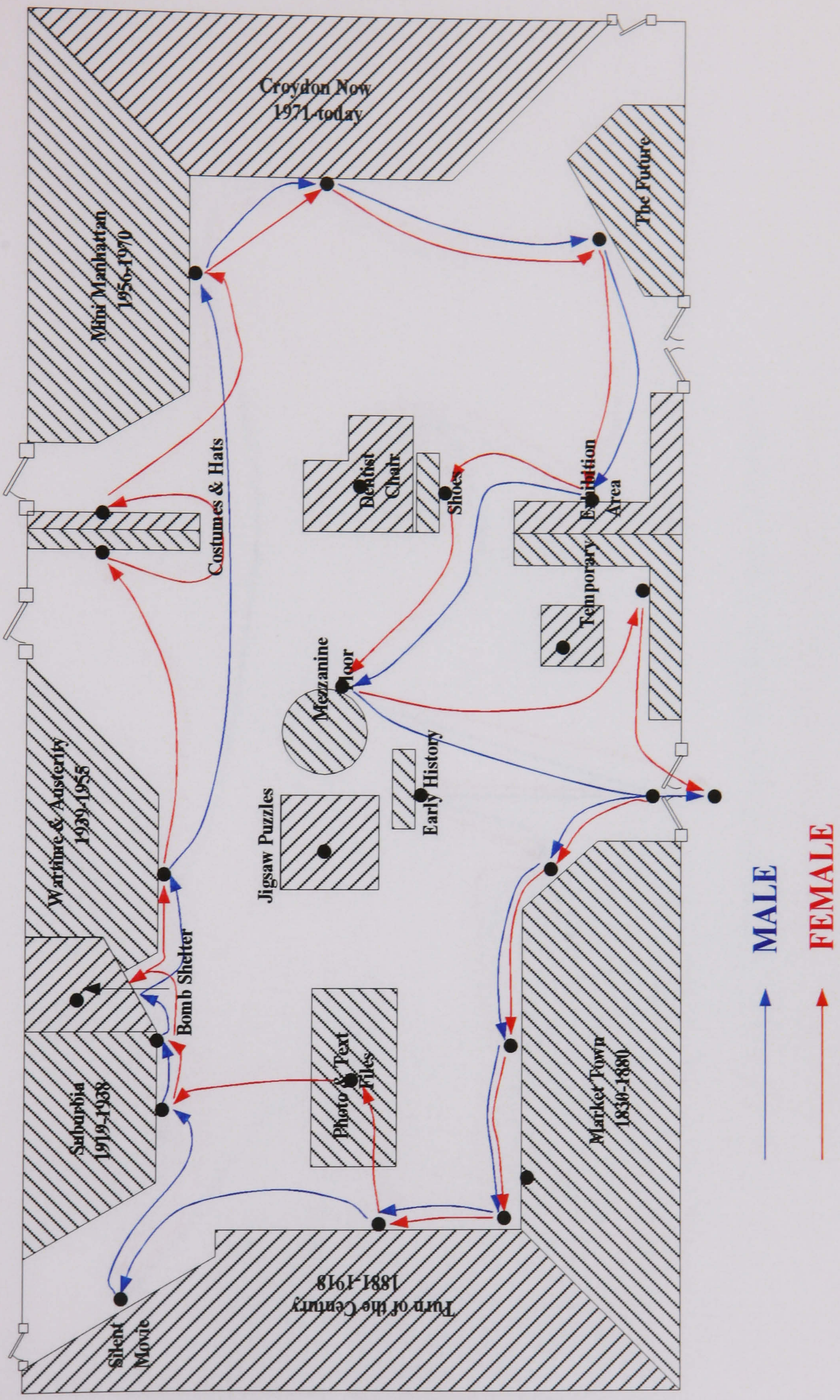

Diagram 2.15b: Museum 'Routes' Map –

Adult Visitors' 'Snail Trails' [Without Children]

[Arrows show the predominant route for each category - from the overall observations per category]

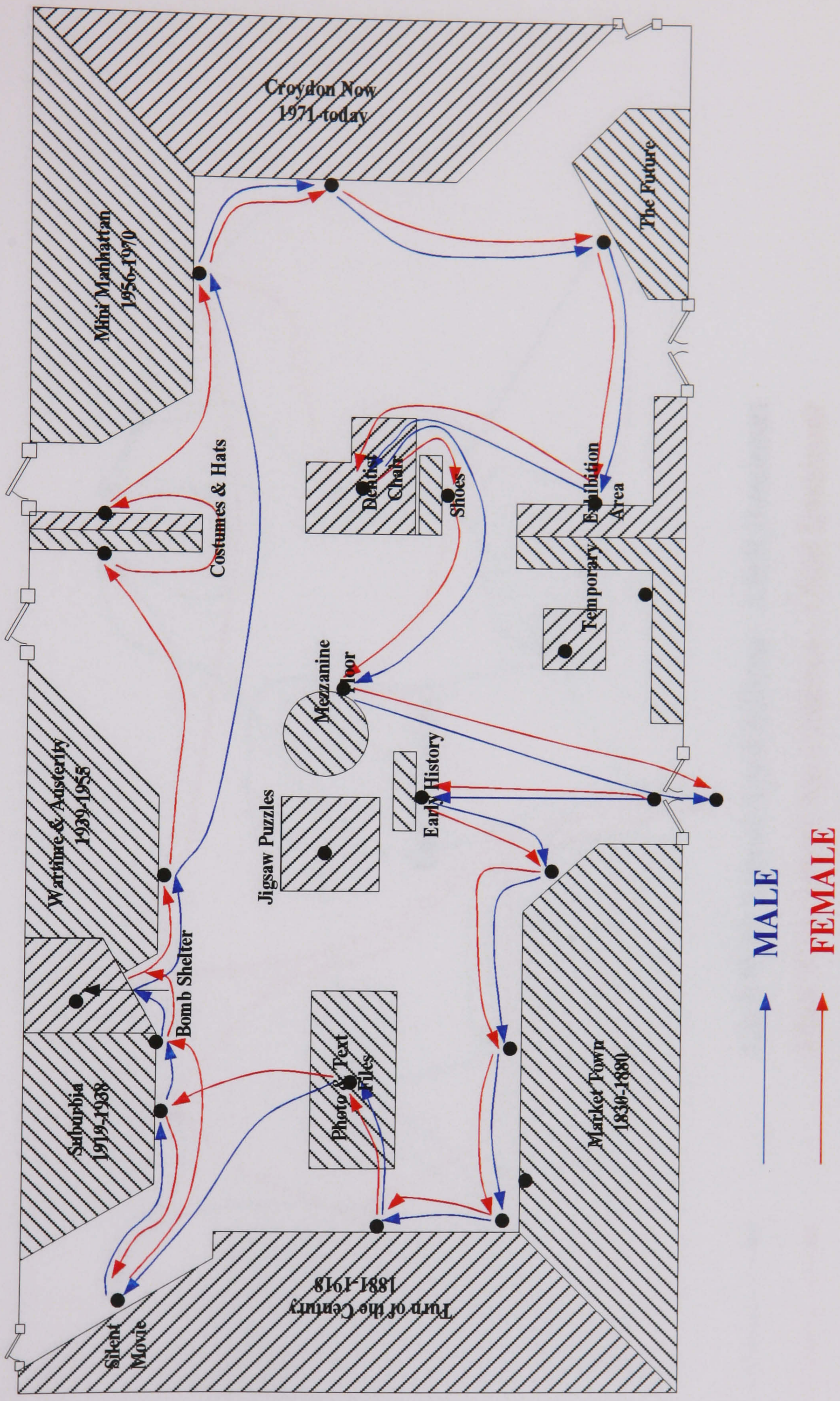

Diagram 2.15c: Museum 'Routes' Map –

Elderly Visitors' 'Snail Trails' [Without Children]

[Arrows show the predominant route for each category - from the overall observations per category]

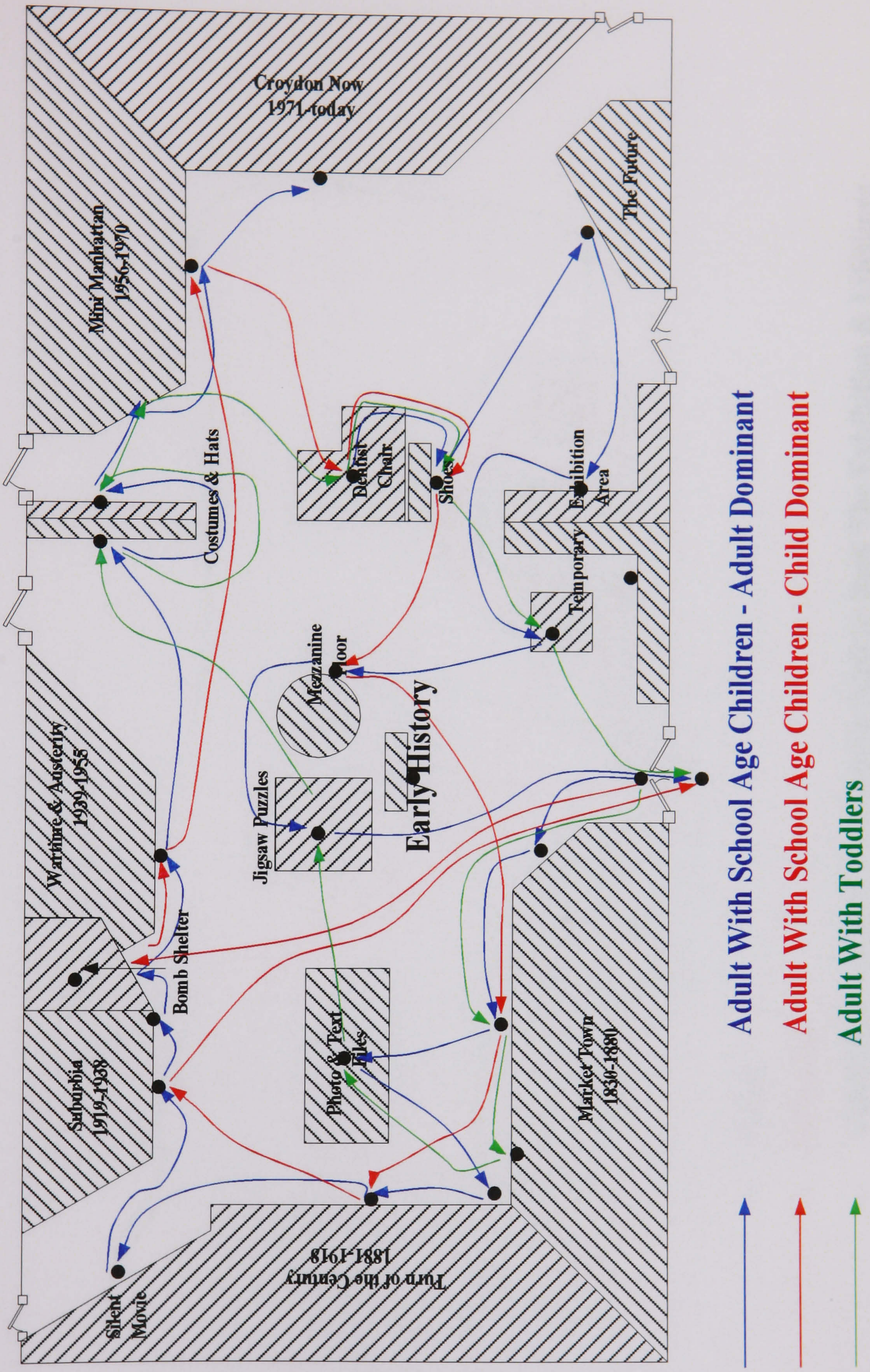

Diagram 2.15d: Museum 'Routes' Map –

Adult / Elderly Visitors' 'Snail Trails' [With Children]

[Arrows show the predominant route for each category - from the overall observations per category]

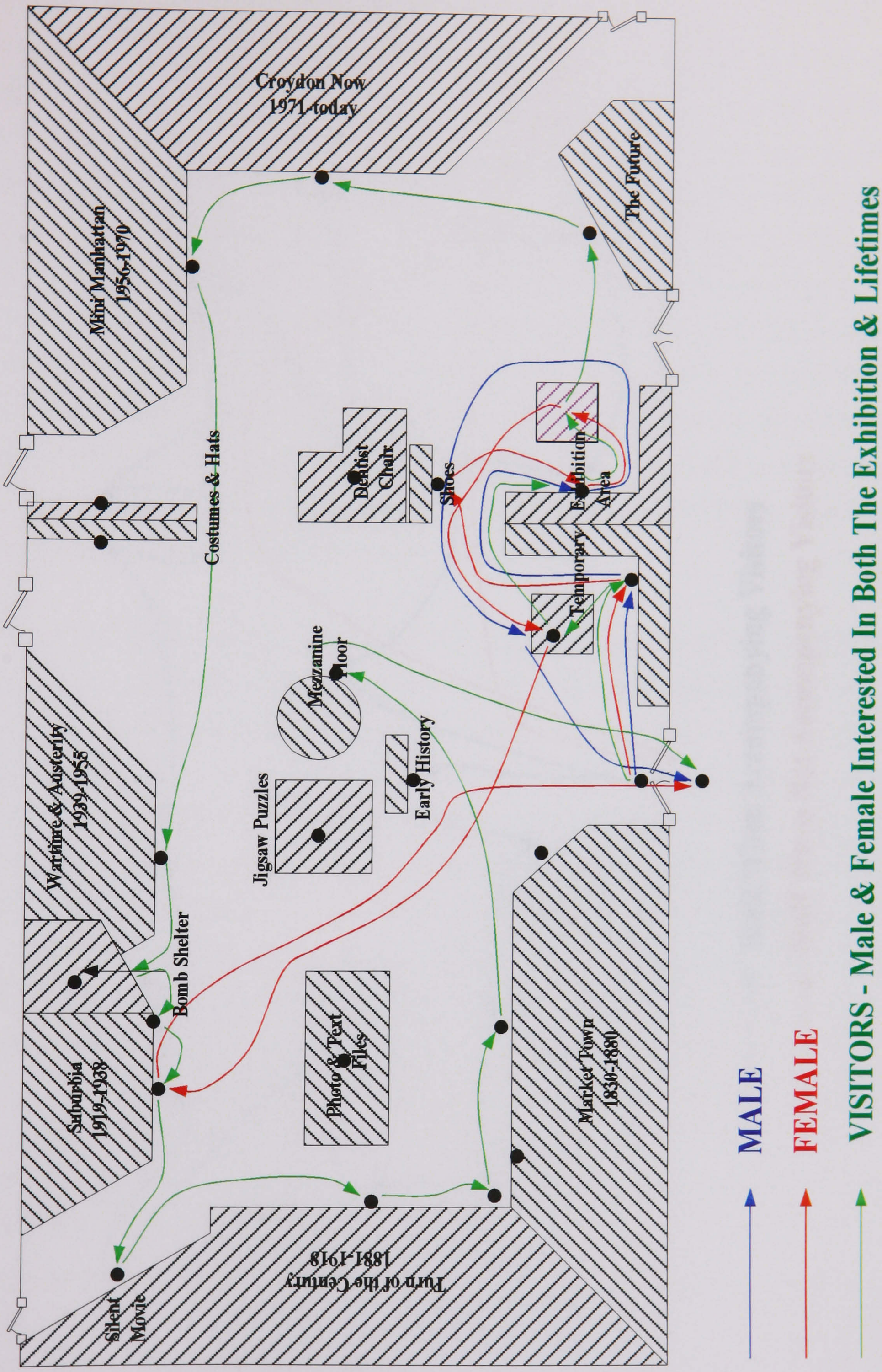

Diagram 2.15e: Museum 'Routes' Map –

Overall 'Snail Trails' [During *'Flower Fairies'* Exhibition]

[Arrows show the predominant route for each category - from the overall observations per category]

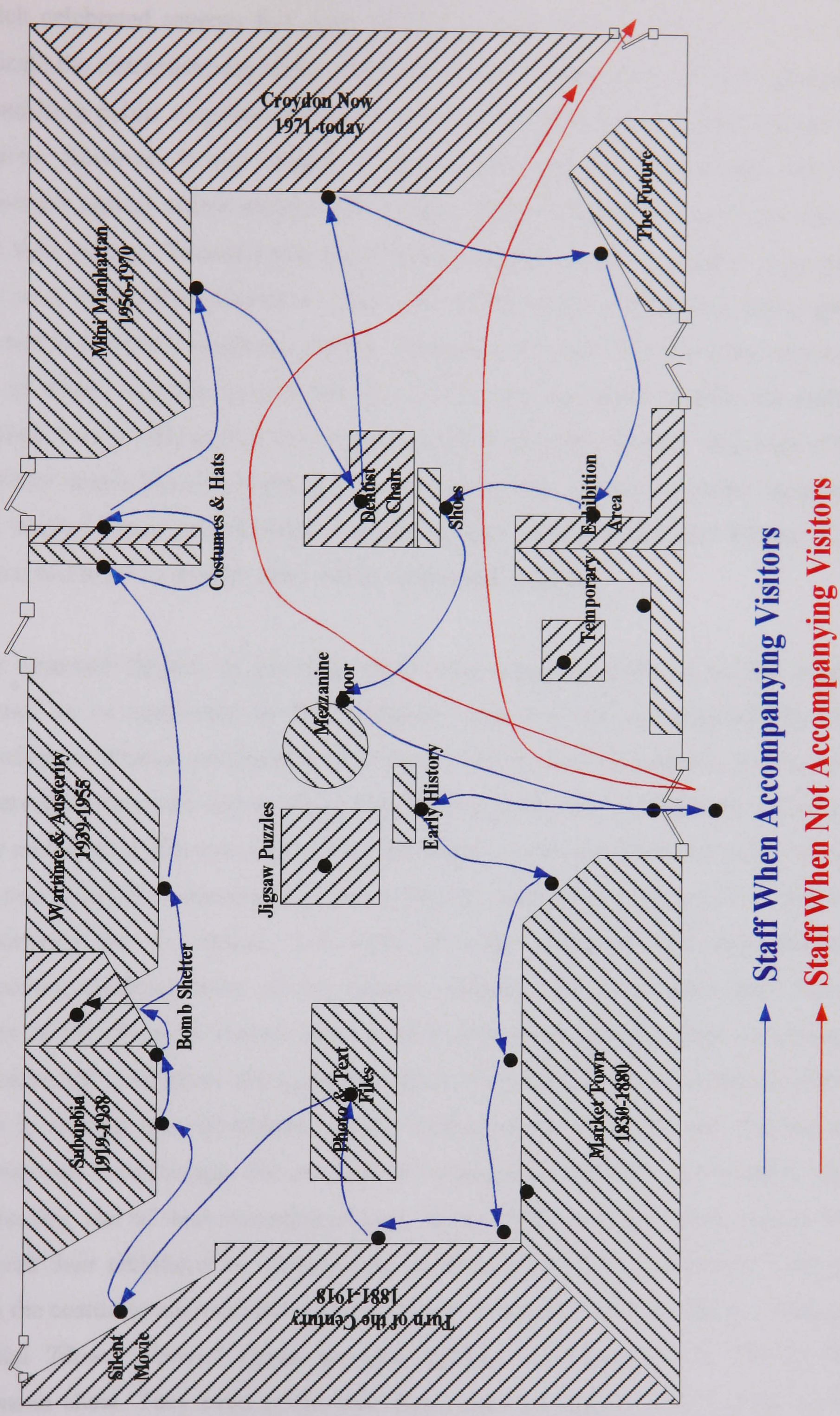

Diagram 2.15f: Museum 'Routes' Map –

Staff's 'Snail Trails' [With / Without Accompanying Visitors]

[Arrows show the predominant route for each category - from the overall observations per category]

The unique 'museum routes' that emerged during the *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition period, which celebrated seventy five years of Cicely Mary Barker's *'Flower Fairies'* books, indicate the distinctiveness of this ambivalent phenomenon. The exhibition generated an astonishing public response that had a dramatic effect on the museum's typical visitor figures. However, it also created a distinct socio-economic and ethnic bias in the museum's typical visitor profile. The *'Flower Fairies'* exhibition, much like the books and their creator, focused upon local, White, English, middle and upper class culture. For many of the observed visitors, who were of that socio-economic and ethnic group, it seemed to provide a wondrous journey 'down memory lane'. Yet, for other visitors, who are of ethnic minority groups and of a lower socio-economic profile, the exhibition seemed to have little appeal. Nevertheless, several observed visitors, who were of ethnic minority origin, but of a higher socio-economic group, seemed genuinely interested in, and excited about the exhibition, which perhaps indicates that the *'Flower Fairies'* theme had more to do with class culture than ethnic culture.

The observed visitors, in particular those who came especially to see the exhibition, seemed to be captivated by the 'hands-on' costumes that accompanied the original drawings on display, particularly when their children tried the costumes on. Some of the observed parents took entire rolls of film, photographing their children in various outfits. One mother took pictures of her young daughter, in every possible costume combination, for over thirty-five minutes. Yet, the exhibition created more than just a 'dressing-up' opportunity for its visitors. It brought up many childhood and early motherhood memories, enabling many of the, typically female, visitors to share their memories. Many of the observed visitors came in multi-generation parties, often comprising of a grandmother, a daughter and a granddaughter. They dedicated a considerable amount of time to reading the information panels, looking at the drawings and chatting among themselves. Many bought *'Flower Fairies'* memorabilia, perhaps as a 'tangible memory' of the day, and of their remembered past. Some of the observed, adult visitors literally re-lived their childhood by participating in all of the children's activities. They played with the costumes and read the *'Flower Fairies'* books that were on display. They put the special *'Flower Fairies'* jigsaw puzzles together and coloured the *'Flower Fairies'* colour-in sheet. They even wrote their name and real age, as if they were pre-school children [See Figure 2.7 – which was 'signed' by a 60 year-old female visitor].

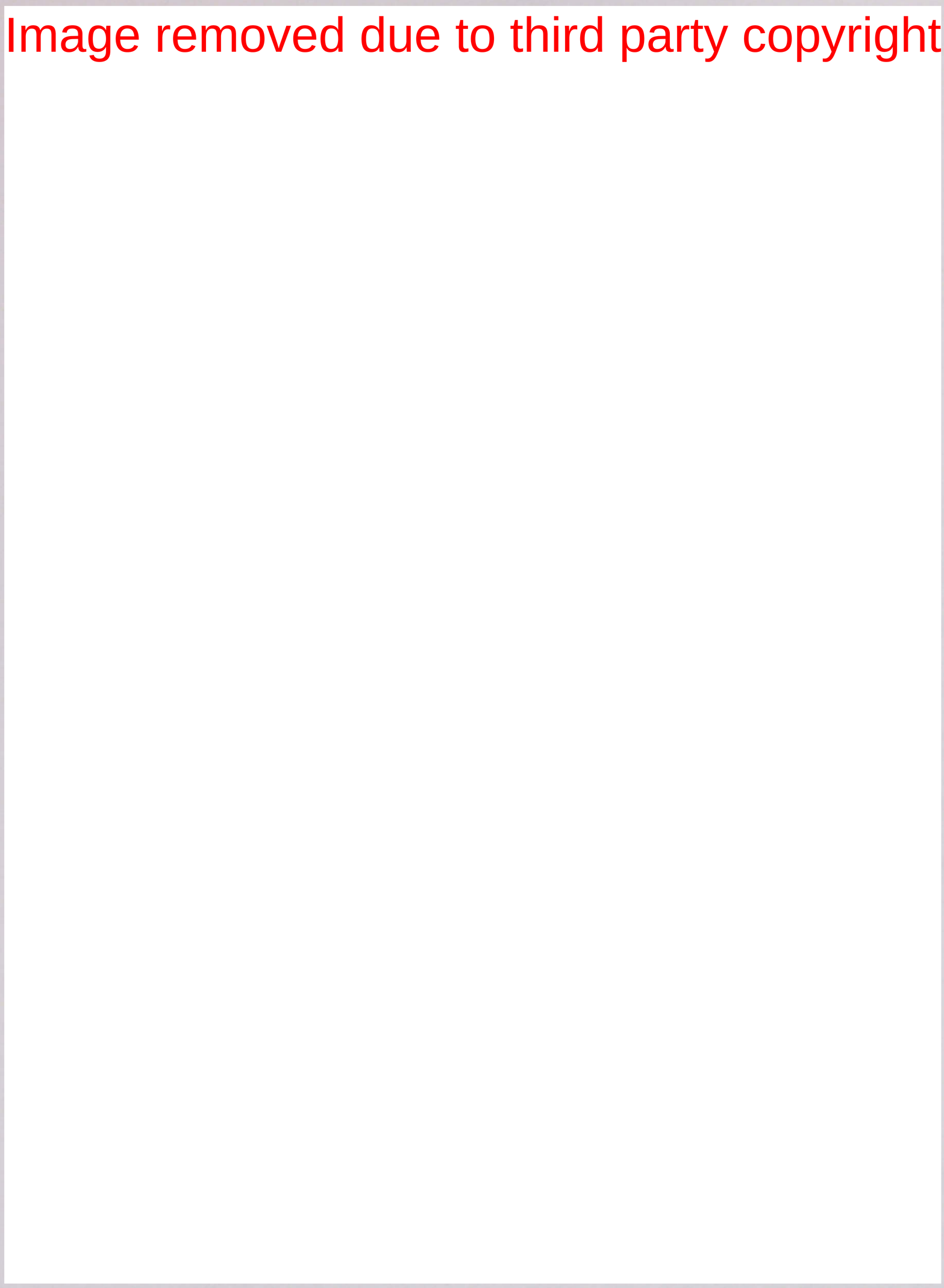

Figure 2.7: *'Flower Fairies'* Exhibition - Adult Visitor's Activity Sheet

[Note the "60 year-old" visitor's 'signature' at the top of the sheet]

[Presented with kind permission of Croydon Museum Service]

Although the observed visitors seemed to fully enjoy the visit, many complained (either in writing, or verbally - in conversations, surveys and interviews) that the exhibition was "quite disappointing" mainly because of its small scale, which did not meet with their expectations. This kind of finding further enhances the importance of comparing the viewers' observed practices, with their voiced discourse, which is the essence of the following module.

Voicing The Viewers

"Initiating change can be a painful process. Museum staff and management committees may need to be persuaded of the merits of change. There is a risk of alienating existing audiences, which may have developed a strong sense of ownership. You may find that all your good intentions and efforts are met with total indifference on the part of the new audiences you are seeking to attract"

(Trevelyan, 1991: 8)

The following account centres upon the voiced expectations, observations and overall perception of *Lifetimes*, as expressed by its various 'viewers' - the people who view and review the museum. These include past 'visionaries' (those who campaigned for a museum, along with those who took part in its production) and present-day 'viewers' (those who are currently experiencing *Lifetimes*, either as visitors, or as staff). Each group has its unique way of seeing, experiencing and evaluating the museum, which reflects their different, and at times conflicting, philosophies and agendas.

The 'Visionaries'

Politics, Philosophy & Production

The 'visionaries' involve three principal groups: Croydon Council, the founding and funding body of the museum; Croydon Museum Service, *Lifetimes'* creators and curators; and Croydon's local societies, the principal driving forces behind Croydon's museum campaign.

Croydon Council

The council's promotional material often reveals their core objectives in establishing a local history museum, which are, primarily, to portray Croydon as an integrated, promising, 'Green Belt' municipality that could (and in their eyes should) be regarded as a city in its own right:

"Croydon's centre buzzes with life and vigour. The signs of the town's success are well known and instantly recognisable: a wealth of shops, stores and restaurants, one of the country's busiest mainline stations and an impressive concentration of office buildings. Home to many leading national and international companies, Croydon is the UK's sixth-largest business and commercial centre... Although only 10 miles from the City of London, Croydon boasts over 5,400 acres of natural Green Belt land, plus a tremendous variety of parks and gardens"

(Croydon Mini Guide, 1998)

The establishment of a renowned cultural centre, as well as a local history museum emphasises Croydon's historical importance and justifies its claim to a place on the - 'cultural map', thereby enhancing the general image and municipal identity of the borough:

> *"Croydon's history has been tracked back as far as prehistoric times and there is still much of historical interest, including medieval churches, 16th century almshouses, and a medieval palace... You could easily spend a whole day at the Clocktower, Croydon's award-winning cultural centre, housing a state-of-the-art central library... [and] Lifetimes, a unique interactive museum, winner of the 1995 Interpret Britain award"*
>
> *(Croydon Mini Guide, 1998)*

The notion of 'One Croydon', which coincides with the council's overall political message of integration, unity and equality, is emphasised and legitimised not only by having a local history museum, but especially by having *one* local history museum for the entire Croydon borough. The strong emphasis upon Croydon's unity, as well as its cultural and historical value, is visually manifested in the borough's advertising material. The - '*Croydon: Information For Visitors*' - promotional pack [See Figure 2.8] is one example, featuring an assortment of photographs showing Croydon's 'best assets'. The cover's pictorial-montage encompasses the market place, railway station, and airport, alongside parks and public gardens, heritage sites and various multi-ethnic cultural events. The central image is that of Croydon's renowned *Clocktower* centre - shown from its most flattering angle.

Figure 2.8: 'Croydon: Information For Visitors' –

A Press & Public Relations Office Promotional Pack

[Presented with kind permission of Croydon Museum Service]

Croydon Museum Service

The museum professionals' aspiration centred upon the creation of an innovative, 'different and daring', local history museum, whose welcoming atmosphere and accessible, people-centred presentation would appeal to, and empower a wide range of audiences (MacDonald, 1998). Special emphasis was placed upon the concept of a 'people's history', or 'history from below' (cf. Samuel, 1996; and 1999), as well as on the 'real thing' (see Orvell, 1989; and Moore, 1997). The display was consequently designed to highlight the *real* life-stories and experiences of *real* local-people, accompanied by their *real* donated-objects.

Lifetimes' promotional pamphlet [see Figures 2.9a and 2.9b] echoes these ideals:

> *"Lifetimes is an extraordinary exhibition about ordinary people. It is based on the real-life experiences of Croydon people from 1830 to the present day, and their hopes and fears for the future. The display features reconstructions, lifelike models and a wealth of belongings, lent by local people"*
>
> *(Lifetimes Promotional Pamphlet, 1997)*

Similarly, the museum's *'Events & Exhibitions'* pamphlet clearly reflects the institution's emphasis upon projecting an unpretentious, 'user friendly' image of a 'high tech' museum that is unmistakably people-oriented:

> *"Everybody's got a story to tell - Lifetimes lets Croydon people tell theirs. We have hundreds of stories, which together help us to better understand the social history of our town. Using touch-screen technology, discover the story of our lives: interesting, moving, funny and sad – just like real life. Lifetimes tells it the way you would"*
>
> *(Croydon Clocktower - Events & Exhibitions Pamphlet, 1999)*

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 2.9a: *Lifetimes* - 'Real People' - Promotional Pamphlet

[Presented with kind permission of Croydon Museum Service]

Figure 2.9b: *Lifetimes* - 'The Real Thing' - Promotional Pamphlet

[Presented with kind permission of Croydon Museum Service]

Lifetimes' manifest principles of pluralism and liberalism, along with the contemporary 'dual-role' of museums as both *educators* and *entertainers* (see section one), were especially apparent in the *'Ancient Egypt: Digging For Dreams'* temporary exhibition. Displaying 'populist' themes alongside more academic presentations enabled the museum to attract a wider, more heterogeneous audience.

Ancient Egypt: Digging For Dreams

Treasures From The Petrie Museum Of Egyptian Archaeology [4]

"Uncover the mysteries of ancient Egypt with the help of a real life Indiana Jones. Flinders Petrie is probably one of the most influential figures in the way that we look at ancient Egypt today. In this stunning new exhibition see over 100 amazing artefacts, older than the pyramids themselves and discover some truths behind one of the world's most fascinating ancient civilisations. Mosaics from the time of Tuthankamun, mummy portraits from Roman Egypt and an actual mummified head and hand all come from the amazing Petrie collection. See them as Petrie himself discovered them, set in an ancient tomb, or in his Victorian study.

However, 'Ancient Egypt: Digging For Dreams' is more than a collection of fascinating objects. Through these remarkable archaeological discoveries you'll uncover a new version of ancient Egypt, which asks questions about our common beliefs. What race were the Egyptians? Did Aliens build the pyramids? Was there a mummy's curse? Journey to the past, through the Victorian age and back to the present and arrive at the truth for yourself"

(Croydon Clocktower - Events & Exhibitions Pamphlet, 2000)

Analysing the choice of wording in the exhibition's pamphlet, and especially in the concluding paragraph, which encourages a more critical viewing of the presentation, further reveals the museum's commitment to the Postmodernist principles of the 'New Museology' movement (see section one), and to a 'Constructivist' model of museum education (cf. Hein, 1995a). "Whereas the didactic model is grounded in the belief that

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[4] *'Ancient Egypt: Digging For Dreams' - was an outcome of a partnership between the Croydon Clocktower (Croydon Museum & Heritage Service), the Petrie Museum (University College London) and the Burrell Collection (Glasgow Cultural & Leisure Services), supported by the Heritage Lottery Access Found.*

knowledge exists independently of both teacher and learner, the Constructivist model sees knowledge as an intellectual construct subject to constant review and revision" (Pitman, 1999: 153). Similar to the Postmodernist philosophical approach of the New Museology, the Constructivist pedagogic approach advocates multi-vocal, open-ended modes of display, which dim the museum's absolute authority over knowledge, and give emphasis to the notion of 'no one truth'. "Knowledge is no longer unified and monolithic, it becomes fragmented and multi-vocal. There is no necessary unified perspective - rather a cacophony of voices may be heard that present a range of views, experiences and values. The voice of the museum is one among many..." (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 152). These concepts clearly correspond to *Lifetimes'* declared philosophy (see section one) and its objective of simultaneously, informing the visitors, yet encouraging them to question the presented information and 'arrive at the truth for themselves'.

Croydon Local Societies

The local societies have been the principal promoters of Croydon's 'museum campaign' since the late nineteenth century. However, their objective has always been to establish a traditional, authoritative museum that would highlight what in their eyes was - 'worthy of defining and displaying as Croydon's history' - to quote one of the members' phrases (see MacDonald, 1998). The local societies' emphasis has always been centred upon a place-oriented museum with an early-history focus. However, *Lifetimes*, the outcome of their prolonged campaign, is a people-oriented museum centring upon 'living-memory' displays. Consequently, most of the local societies' members seldom visit *Lifetimes*, and some have never visited the museum at all. Unfortunately, several of the members were unable to divorce my study from what they perceived, disapprovingly, as an association with *Lifetimes*. As a result, only a few of the local societies' members agreed to participate in the study.

One of the more obliging 'museum campaigners' I interviewed was John, a retired railway administrator in his late sixties, and an active member of both the 'Natural History Society' and the 'Local Studies Forum' (see section one). As a native Croydonian and an avid collector of vintage Croydon postcards and model railways, John donated numerous objects to the *Lifetimes* display. This unique position grants him insight into both the museum's perspective and the local societies' viewpoint:

Q: "Your group campaigned for a museum for many years.
Are you pleased with the outcome?"

A: "I think some are and some aren't, and there are one or two, like me, who are still unsure. Our chairman has worked at the Horniman Museum for many years, and she's our curator, and she's very interested in archaeology and that sort of thing, but of course there isn't any archaeology there, so of course she's very disappointed. But you know, her ideas are from a different generation, so she couldn't see why we had to have a 'Body Shop' display, when there was one in the Whitgif Centre, you know, that sort of thing"

Stewart, an amicable, well-educated book collector in his mid fifties, and an active member of the 'Local Studies Forum' voiced a similar, if somewhat more critical, view:

Q: "Your group campaigned for a museum for many years.
Are you pleased with the outcome?"

A: "Not really. No"

Q: "Why not?"

A: "Well, for a start it's too selective. OK, museums have to be selective, I understand that, but Lifetimes concentrates on later periods to the complete exclusion of the earlier periods. We have a major Iron Age Anglo-Saxon burial site, and we were important in Tudor times, because the Archbishop of Canterbury had his palace here, and those periods have been completely ignored in Lifetimes... It's partly a generational thing. I am aware of the fact that I am an older generation than the museum staff, and the things that I find interesting are quite different to their interests. It's also partly gender. The museum team was all female then [at the time of *Lifetimes'* creation] *so there was a certain 'female bias', if you like"*

Hooper-Greenhill's study (2000) of what she defines as the 'post-museum' highlights the overall 'feminisation' of Postmodern museums. "Rather than upholding the ['masculine'] values of objectivity, rationality, order and distance, the post-museum will negotiate responsiveness, encourage mutually nurturing partnerships and celebrate diversity"

(2000: 153). Such 'feminine' values were manifestly employed in the production of *Lifetimes'* presentation (cf. Fisher 1990a, 1990b; Fussell, 1997; and MacDonald, 1998), and proudly advocated by staff members, during our frequent, casual conversations. However the issue of the staff's gender (which is still predominately female) seemed to trigger a more ambivalent response. Some members of staff dismissed it as coincidental, unintentional, and of little consequence. Others took pride in the fact that women were attaining traditionally-male professions and positions, seeing it as a sign of progress, as well as an opportunity for new ways of 'seeing' and producing museum presentations. Macdonald's study of the Science Museum (2002a) reveals very similar reactions to the gender issue. "The first thing that was nearly always mentioned was the fact that they were all women. This, as the Museum's Director noted at the opening of the exhibition, was unprecedented in the history of the Museum... The Team members themselves were somewhat ambivalent on why there were only women in the team and of its possible consequences. Sometimes they wanted to dismiss it... At other times, however, they saw the all-woman team as a crucial - and encouraging - departure from previous Museum arrangements" (2002: 108).

The 'Forum' members I interviewed (who were, predominately, middle-aged men) seemed concerned not only with the effect of age and gender on *Lifetimes'* presentation, but also with the influence of contemporary 'fashions' and the general democratisation of museums and their displays:

> *"There's this "fashion" for transforming museums into an "experience"... There was this whole 'political shift' that museums have to be more entertaining, the lowest common denominator, rather than the highest common denominator, that they shouldn't be elitist, and so on, so people like me were disenfranchised. By trying to get to the people that don't go to the old-fashioned museum, they have disenfranchised the ones who do go, they've gone down a route that has left us behind... It's become entertainment at the expense of education"*

Zolberg's study (1994) echoes these notions. "There is, however, the persistently evoked danger that democratisation is being accomplished at the expense of the "elite" experience. Some fear that the museum may become, instead of a serious institution, a place of popular entertainment with no standards of quality to govern

the selection of artworks" (1994: 63). The academic debate on contemporary History and Heritage displays (see section one) voices a similar concern, with many critics, such as Hewison (1987), Walsh (1992) and Lowenthal (1985; 1998) viewing multimedia experiences as artificial, inaccurate representations of the past, which are more of a market-driven, 'Disneyfied', tourist attraction than a valuable didactic display. Walsh (1992) further maintains that the entertainment value of such presentations is emphasised over the historical content, to the detriment of the educational value. As such, he claims, History and Heritage 'experiences' cannot be regarded as 'proper', didactic, museums.

Stewart's discontent with the outcome of his prolonged museum-campaign, mirrors this notion:

> *"It's such a wasted opportunity. Croydon fought, a lot of people in Croydon fought, for many years, to get a museum. It just so happened that when we finally got it, we were in the middle of this "fashion" that meant we couldn't have a proper museum..."*

The perception of *Lifetimes* as 'different' (compared to traditional, didactic displays) is shared by many of its viewers, whether they perceive the museum as 'proper', or not. The following segment voices these diverse views.

"At the open end of the scale, we might want to find ways of getting visitors simply to tell us about their visit. This is more difficult than it sounds, for questions like 'What did you think of the exhibition?' often seem to produce very abbreviated answers, such as 'Not bad'. While it can be gratifying for museum staff to be able to go away saying that most visitors do not identify anything amiss with the exhibition (for it seems comparatively rare for visitors to be critical of exhibitions in these circumstances), the responses tell us virtually nothing"

(Macdonald, 1993: 78)

While my own experience of interviewing visitors certainly mirrors Macdonald's observations, I would suggest viewing this data as a preliminary 'layer of evidence', which combined and compared with subsequent, distinctive 'layers of evidence' can generate a more profound understanding of the *Lifetimes* experience, as the following segment exemplifies.

Visitors' initial reaction to the *Lifetimes* museum was characteristically that of surprise. This was reflected both physically - in their facial expression and slower walking pace as they entered the museum for the first time, as well as verbally - in their comments during and, especially, after the visit.

The initial, verbal response given by an overwhelming majority of the interviewed visitors (98%) was that they were "pleasantly surprised" with the museum, which they often described as "different". Many commented on the museum's warm and welcoming atmosphere, as well as on the amount of materials on display, despite the limited space. These preliminary findings (taken from the visitor survey and initial 'visitor-informant' interviews that were conducted during the early stages of fieldwork) are consistent with the analysis of secondary data, such as visitors' letters and comment forms, as well as with the results of *Lifetimes'* annual survey, which shows that "97% of those surveyed found it good value for money" (Fussell, 1997: 56).

However, during the course of fieldwork, new 'layers of evidence' began to emerge, which were often quite different from the initial results. One of the most unpredicted

results was the extremely low number of returning-visitors. Although all of the interviewed visitors (informants, and non-informants alike) declared that they would consider re-visiting *Lifetimes*, only a few of my long-term 'visitor-informants' came back to the museum, and none of the fifty surveyed visitors were encountered again, throughout the research phase. In other words, all of the 'non-informant' visitors I had surveyed, throughout fieldwork, were 'first-time' visitors, rather than 'returning' visitors.

However, the most clearly distinctive 'layer of evidence' emerged from the continuous, long-term contacts with my informants, which enabled the study of, and comparison between their initial impression, and lasting perception of *Lifetimes*.

Kirsten, a single mother from North Croydon, who works as a 'dinner lady' at her daughter's school, exemplifies the variance between the initial and the lasting evidence. I first met Kirsten when she accompanied her daughter on a school visit to *Lifetimes*. During the visit Kirsten was full of praise for the museum, stating how "fantastically different" it was, and how much fun her daughter was having. "We'll definitely be back" she declared as we parted. However, a year or so later, during a follow up interview, Kristen "admitted" (to use her phrase) that she would probably not take her daughter for a second visit to *Lifetimes*, or go on her own accord. Her lasting perception of the museum seemed to differ, quite considerably, from her initial impression:

> *"Well, it's really small and cluttered, isn't it. And it's mostly for children... I mean, it's a bit boring for an adult really"*

Susie, a married mother of two from South Croydon, who works as a health care assistant at a nursing home, provides a further example. Her lasting impression of *Lifetimes* demonstrates a similar kind of shift from a very positive, initial reaction to a less favourable, lasting perception:

> *"It's far too small and they put far too much on, especially for such a small space. And it doesn't really tell you anything, you know? You're just looking. I know that's what museums are for - just to look, but... this is going to sound really horrible, but I didn't find Lifetimes all that interesting. I don't know why, I just didn't. I mean I've been there twice now, with the school, and the second time I thought - gosh, we're going there again?!"*

As suggested by Macdonald (1993), such variance might be explained by the tendency of most museum visitors to provide polite, abbreviated responses to survey and interview questions, as well as their typical reluctance to criticise the display. Establishing an amicable, long-term connection allowed my informants to, gradually, feel more at ease with expressing less-than-favourable views. However, there are two additional factors that influence this variance, which must be equally acknowledged - time and perspective.

The visitors' initial impression is an immediate response to the physical, emotional and intellectual impact of their museum experience. This could explain why visitors frequently comment on the museum's atmosphere and the novelty of the experience, which is very different (for better or worse) from their expectations of a museum visit. The visitors' lasting impression is the memory of the museum experience and what they feel they have gained from it, which, for some visitors, seemed disappointingly little. The reason for this may well be linked to the issue of perspective.

Most adults visit the museum as part of a group, be it their family, or their child's school. As such, their experience of *Lifetimes* is not that of an individual visitor, but rather that of an adult group-member, which usually entails the responsibilities of being 'in role' as an escort to younger group-members. As a result, their initial perception and evaluation of *Lifetimes* is from the perspective of an accompanying-adult, which centres upon the children's experience and enjoyment. This is reflected in prevalent statements such as - "It was great for the kids"; "The children loved it"; "The kids had a lot of fun". However, when asked to recall, and re-evaluate their visit (after a long period of time) the visitors refer not only to their memories of the children's experience, but also to their memories of their own museum experience, which are often 'non-existent', as they did not have the time, opportunity, or, primarily, the 'mind-set' to explore and experience the museum on their own accord, as the following, typical, follow-up response reveals:

Q: "Were the stories relevant to your own life experiences?"

A: "I don't know, I haven't actually read them... I was with the children you see, so I haven't actually gone around on my own accord"

Other typical examples include statements such as:

"All I can remember from Lifetimes is the Anderson Shelter - the kids really loved that. And then on the board next to it they show where the bombs fell, Jesse learned about it in school that term. That's all I can remember really"

In this sense, the accompanying adult-visitors become 'passive observers' of the museum visit, instead of 'active participants', which may well generate a lasting impression of the visit as unmemorable. This 'non-experience' of *Lifetimes* reveals not only the visitors' perspective as escorts, but also their (unmet) expectations, and preconceptions of the museum:

"You think of a museum being a vast, big house with lots of rooms and lots of things to see and learn about, you know, and all this was, was just this one, cluttered, little room. So I guess I was a bit disappointed, just because I had 'museum' in mind, you know?"

Moreover, it is a reflection of the overall sense of confusion (and lack of direction) that *Lifetimes*' Postmodernist approach seems to evoke in some of its visitors - with its eclectic display and non-didactic, multi-vocal presentation:

"It's rather sort of 'avant-garde', isn't it. I mean, it's not that easy to find your way around the exhibition, you know? Say if you want to trace something through the history of Croydon, it's not very easy to do..."

"It certainly looks different, but once you get past the 'wow' factor you can't really put together any coherent idea of the history of Croydon. What you get is a somewhat quirky notion... all because of this incoherent jumble-display"

Hudson's study (1987) highlights the importance of clarity and comprehensibility in history displays, arguing that - "To become history, the facts and the objects must tell a coherent and intelligible story" (1987: 113). Greenberg's essay on the 'Meta Narratives' of museum displays (2001) emphasises a similar notion of intelligibility. "Some museums you can understand at a glance - the visitor steps over the threshold and instantly grasps what the story is... Other museums are much more opaque, or they don't have one story - you may object that this is no bad thing - but actually it is if it takes the majority of visitors more than a few minutes to understand what a museum is about - longer than that and you've lost them for good. They need a contents page..." (2001: 17-18).

The idea of a much-needed 'content page' for museum visitors is consistent with the principals of - 'Conceptual Orientation', or 'Thematic Orientation' (see Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a; Hein, 1998; as well as Falk & Dierking, 2000). Striving for a more accessible, 'user-friendly' environment in museums, Screven (1986) has advocated the use of - 'advanced organisers' (a pedagogic concept initially developed by Ausubel in 1968), which provide a framework of orientation for visitors. Screven identified three types of advance organisers: "conceptual pre-organisers (brief information about exhibits); topographic organisers (e.g., simplified maps); and overviews (what can be seen and done; what can be learned)" (Screven 1986, in: Hooper-Greenhill, 1994: 69)

Likewise, Maslow's model of 'Self Actualisation' (1954) is frequently adapted to serve as a means of evaluating 'museum experiences', by the levels of physical and mental access they provide (cf. David, 1994; Hein & Alexander, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 2000). Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' is then 'translated' into a hierarchy of visitor comfort that includes everything from light levels and colour schemes to noise, crowd density, and overall visitor traffic flows, as well as the design and content of the presentation itself, and its conceptual intelligibility (see Hein, 1998: 137-138). "The need to make meaning of the physical setting is innate... visitors [need] to orient themselves in space, to explore that which is novel, to prepare themselves mentally for what is to come, and to make overall sense of the museum environment. Good design draws visitors in, engages all their senses, and compels them to investigate the topic at hand" (Falk & Dierking, 2000: 132).

Lifetimes' warm and welcoming ambience, as well as its surprisingly 'different' setting is instrumental in catching viewers' attention and (more often than not) drawing them in. For some viewers, especially those who are familiar with Postmodernist philosophies and 'New Museology' principals, *Lifetimes'* presentation was innovative and intriguing. However, for other viewers the novelty of the display, in terms of both contents and design, was too great, and too far removed from their preconceptions and expectations. The multitude of 'voices' and abundance of objects were perceived by these viewers as both physical and mental 'clutter', reflecting perhaps their sense of 'mental overloading' (see Miles, 1998: 21-24), as well as their feelings of ambiguity and confusion as to how they are meant to engage with the display.

Rachel Hasted, *Lifetimes'* principal museum officer during the fieldwork period, voiced similar concerns in her critique of *Lifetimes'* progressive philosophy and presentation:

> *"I am slightly challenged by the very radical way in which Lifetimes says - there is no 'correct version' and we will allow all these people to speak their truth, and you can decide for yourself whether you think this actually happened, and did it happen like this - all we've done is check the dates... I think Lifetimes should have been more 'up front' about its principles. What it lacks at the moment is a clear introduction - people don't 'get' the 'rules of the game' before they actually start playing"*

Perhaps the most surprising evidence to emerge from the continuous, long-term contact with various informants, was the striking similarities between the visitors' expectations and first impressions of the museum and the staff's expectations and first impressions. When interviewed about *Lifetimes*, staff members always expressed their pride in their innovative museum, seldom voicing any kind of criticism. However, when asked to recall their first experience of *Lifetimes* (in other words, their initial encounter, prior to joining Croydon Museum Service) the accounts and critique were not unlike those expressed by visitors, as well as some of the 'Local Studies Forum' members. Rachel's first encounter with the museum, as an 'outside' visitor, provides a sound example:

> *Q: "Do you remember your first visit to Lifetimes?"*
>
> *A: "I actually came to the opening, and it was jammed with people so it was quite difficult to see, but I remember vividly what my first impression was - I can remember the sense of shock I had. I mean these really confusing categories, all thrown together, you know. I was standing there wondering - what does it mean? Because I couldn't fight my way to the interactive, I couldn't see how it was supposed to work... Then, when I actually was able to come back and explore it, I was very impressed with the sophistication of the way it had been built up, and the rigour, in terms of the coverage for twenty five different themes, regularly, across the whole gallery. I thought it was extraordinarily clever and new, and it related to my view of the world. It was very 'history from below' and it questioned a lot of sacred cows, and I relate very well to all that"*

Jeff, a museum professional, in his mid thirties and a keen collector of fifties ceramics, provides another manifest example. Jeff has worked at *Lifetimes'* from its early days. Like Rachel, he too can vividly recall his first impression of the museum, just prior to its opening:

> *Q: "Do you remember your first visit to Lifetimes?"*
>
> *A: "I remember the first time I went in, they had just started fitting it out and my impression, even though I knew those rooms from before, was how small it was. I had conjured up an image of something that was going to be much bigger. So I remember being really surprised at how jumbled and squashed it looked, and how much there was there in such a small space. I remember thinking - this is really not what I imagined it was going to be, it's just like a junk shop! I didn't like a lot of things, some of them I still don't like now"*
>
> *Q: "Such as?"*
>
> *A: "I don't like that some of the objects aren't visually attractive. I don't like that it's got a wooden floor, I think it should have like, much softer surfaces. And I don't like the colour scheme. I don't like the contrasting red bars that go round the edges... And I think that the interactive is quite cumbersome to use, unless you know your way around it. I think that it's too easy for people not to follow up on the stories and just do the quiz... But I still think Lifetimes is brilliant, compared to other museums!"*

Multimedia presentations have become a prevalent strategy in making museums 'culturally relevant' to an increasingly 'media-literate' society (see Witcomb, 2003: 44). The widespread use of interactive units is perceived as a means of revitalising and enlivening the museum, transforming it from a 'static place' into an 'interactive space'. The contemporary emphasis on 'immersion' and 'interaction', together with these newly developed technologies - "allow today's museums to hold their own with television, films and video games" (ibid.).

Lifetimes' multimedia presentation and 'non-label' system was referred to in all of the interviews, be it with visitors, or staff members. As evident from both their body language and their verbal communications, many viewers found this mode of display

quite confusing at first, leaving them somewhat baffled as to how the presentation was meant to work. However, once they got the gist of it, most visitors were able to negotiate the presentation without much difficulty.

As far as the interactive units themselves are concerned, opinions (as well as practices) seem to have a clear age-group divide, with 'viewers' (staff and visitors alike) under the age of thirty-five expressing a very positive view of the computer touch screens, and 'viewers' over the age of thirty-five (including staff, visitors and 'Forum' members) opposing it. Older viewers, such as John, generally found the medium quite 'off putting' and annoying:

> *"I'm not too keen on the touch screens really. It's quite difficult to follow through at first, and you don't really have a choice, I mean if you want to know about something. Because nothing is labelled you've got to find things on the touch screen. I found that quite irritating really"*

Stewart voiced a similar critique, expressing his doubts about the value of computerised presentations over the traditional 'label system':

> *"Ok, so they've taken away the glass case and put all the objects on a stand. But you still have to have a card, or a piece of paper, or a computer screen, telling you what it is, right? So, in that sense it really hasn't moved on at all, it's exactly the same as before. The only difference is that the label is computerised, and it isn't with the damn thing. I think that's a retrograde step really. They've tried so hard to make it look "jazzy & snazzy", but in the end it just gets in the way of coherence"*

On the other hand, younger viewers, and especially those accompanying school-age children, were very pleased with the interactive option, as Susie's comment exemplifies:

> *"The computers are really good. I mean you can go upstairs and sit in front of the screens - and the kids just love that, don't they, doing the computers, finding out what they've got to find out - so that's really good. It keeps them occupied, and it's not boring"*

Benjamin, a software programmer in his late twenties, shared this positive view of the museum's 'computerised alternative' to the more traditional mode of display:

> *"It has to be said, it's been a long time since I've been to this sort of museum. I'm used to a very formal kind of museum, you know, things behind glass cabinets and little plaques describing what each thing was. Lifetimes was much more fun, it has to be said. I really enjoyed it. I was particularly impressed with the interactive stuff. I found that really refreshing"*

The views regarding the museum's multimedia presentation might have been divided, but there was an overall consensus, among all of the 'viewers', regarding *Lifetimes'* most gratifying feature - the 'hands-on' handling sessions. To quote Susie's outspoken praise:

> *"The best thing about the Lifetimes visit was the 'hands on' session. That was very good. They had to draw what they were handling, and find out about it and learn as much as they could from looking and touching. It made it much more interesting, and you learn so much more by 'hands on' than by looking"*

The handling sessions (which are only available to school groups) encourage the participants to inspect, examine and reflect upon the presented objects, by enabling a more intimate, sensory study, through sight, smell, touch and thought. These interactive sessions were led by *Lifetimes'* education officer at the time, a young, enthusiastic museum professional, in her early thirties, who invested much of her academic skill and experience in creating the handling-session routine.

> *"I want them to be excited about the objects and I want their curiosity to be stimulated. I want them to enjoy getting their hands on things, and I think they do. They get the chance to look at things close up and touch them, and see how it works, turn it upside down and look at the workings underneath and that kind of thing. It's very much about looking, asking questions, trying to find the answers through observation, trying to make sensible guesses from the information that they have got and being able to talk about it and share it with each other. I think the talking and the sharing and doing that kind of teamwork is important. I am consciously trying to provide something else from what they normally do... I think it is very important to give kids first-hand experiences and allow them to 'have a go' in a situation where they are not being assessed, where they are not being marked on what they say, or how they say it"*

Despite the striking similarities between the visitors' first impressions of the museum and the staff's first impressions, there are still a few, pronounced differences between the two groups in the way they perceive and experience *Lifetimes*. The most fundamental of these differences regards the issue of authenticity, or in other words - the 'real people' who present their 'real life-stories' on the *Lifetimes* multimedia displays. While most visitors realised that the objects, stories and people on display at the museum were real, they seemed relatively indifferent to it. However, the staff's perception of this 'authentic' quality was quite the opposite, as the majority of them took great pride in the museum's 'real' presentation, as evident from the following sentiments:

"Lifetimes is very personal. It's about real people and real history, and real memories. It's very evocative... It makes history real and brings it alive"

"I love the fact that you can hear real people's voices. You could never invent that, you could never make it up. And I love the fact that there is so much hours worth of interesting stories there, fascinating stories that are just completely absorbing, and interesting, and touching..."

"People can see their own experiences reflected in the stories and the objects no matter what ethnic background they come from, or what their own past was like. You have different people keying into different things that mean something to them. There's a story about going on a family holiday to Ibiza and it's got photographs from the 70s or something like that, and I look at it and I think - that could so easily have been my family. So, depending on how old you are, you sort of see things that are meaningful to you, you know"

Unsurprisingly perhaps, Stewart expressed a rather contradictory point of view:

"I'm all in favour of real-life experiences. I've been a member of the Oral History Society since it started and I've done oral history research myself, but I don't think it works as a basis for a museum. A local museum is about a local place. I mean, the thing that makes Croydon different is that it's Croydon. It's the place, not the people that's distinctive... I'd get rid of all these semi-fictitious people"

Q: "What do you mean by 'semi-fictitious'? These are real people, you know"

A: "Yes, of course, but once they're put up there and bits of their lives are cemented, these 'real people' become semi-fictitious"

This final observation may provide the key to understanding the dramatic difference in perception between the staff and the visitors, in this particular regard. The real people presented in *Lifetimes* seem very 'real' to the staff, because they actually know them. They have had a relationship with them, over a considerable period of time. They have interviewed them and recorded their real life-stories, in the context of their real homes. They have borrowed their real, personal possessions, which they have then incorporated into their own, personal creation - the museum display.

The visitors on the other hand, are only offered a 'snippet' of these people's life-stories, which are divorced from the wider context of actually knowing the people behind the narratives. There is no real link, no real connection, or an opportunity for interaction, between the 'real people' who visit the museum and the 'real people' who are the museum. In this sense the museum's 'portrait of real-life' becomes a 'portrait of still-life'. It can then be argued that by shifting the emphasis from 'object' (and 'place') to 'people' the museum is turning the people into the 'collected objects' of the display.

The second, profoundly related, issue is *Lifetimes'* influence on its viewers' perception of Croydon and its history, which was one of the main objectives of the museum from the perspective of both its creating professionals and the Croydon Council.

Most of the visitors stated that the museum did not change their image of Croydon and its history (other than making them realise that Croydon actually has a history). However, all of the staff members, without exception, claimed that *Lifetimes* has completely transformed their view of Croydon. This was especially apparent in Rachel's interview:

Q: "Did Lifetimes change your image of Croydon?"

A: "Oh yes. Oh absolutely. I mean I remember talking to Angela when she was doing the initial research before it was ever open and she would say, 'Oh I'm just off to interview somebody who makes dog coffins' or something, you know, and I'm thinking – what's going on in this place, it's extreme! [Laughs] Lifetimes has paid a lot of good quality attention to a lot of lives,

which would have been written off as uninteresting otherwise. It revealed the extraordinariness of ordinary lives and made you think - all this is going on here, in Croydon! Lifetimes has given Croydon an amazing human face"

And yet, such notions may well be an outcome of the staff's direct interactions with local people while conducting research for various future displays and exhibitions. It is, in all probability, the practice and active involvement that has transformed Croydon's image in their eyes, rather than the end result of their endeavours - the museum display itself. Likewise, the lack of direct interaction and personal involvement (alongside the resulting lack of attachment) may account for the visitors' apparent indifference to the museum's earnest efforts to transform their image of Croydon.

Macdonald's concept of 'cultural imagining' (1992) is also instrumental in explaining the visitors 'non-reaction', as it highlights the fact that visitors are not passive recipients of knowledge and ideas. Instead, they bring their own vision and particular preconceptions towards certain imaginings (Macdonald, 1992: 407-408). In other words, the visitors preconceptions and expectations (which are influenced by their personal background, past experiences, knowledge, beliefs, motivations and interests) play an important role in shaping their reading of the museum and its display (see Belcher, 1991: 182; and Silverman, 1995: 161-162). However, the consumers' expectations and particular readings of the museum and its presentation do not always coincide with the producers' intentions and objectives.

Conclusion

Exploring people's perception, discourse, practice and overall experience of *Lifetimes* (from the different perspectives of its diverse 'viewers') has been the primary purpose of this transitional section, which links the methodological framework and fieldwork review discussed in section one with the principal analysis presented in sections three, four and five.

Correlating the multifaceted findings of this research enabled the construction of a detailed, comprehensive account of people's voiced perceptions and observed practices of visiting the *Clocktower* centre in general, and the *Lifetimes* museum in particular.

The *Clocktower* observation sessions proved instrumental in establishing an overall profile of its visitors, the majority of whom are White adults, between the ages of sixteen and forty-four. The observation sessions also ascertained certain visitor dynamics, like typical visiting times and 'first destination' choices.

The *Lifetimes* observation sessions conducted at both the entrance to the museum and, especially, in the gallery space itself were extremely valuable for establishing the museum's visitor-profile, as well as ascertaining visitors' practices, preferences and attention spans, which vary considerably in accordance to the visitor's age and gender.

Nevertheless, the most intriguing material emerged from combining and correlating the quantitative market-research data with the qualitative, ethnographic data, which enabled comparisons between distinctive 'layers of evidence', including the observed practices and expressed perceptions, during the museum visit, immediately following the visit, and long after the visit (following an on-going period of contact with the informant). One of the most interesting findings was the surprising correlation between the visitors' first impression of *Lifetimes* and the staff's first impression. Equally fascinating were the distinct differences between the staff and the visitors in regard to their lasting perception of *Lifetimes*' presentation, as well as the affect it had on their overall view of Croydon.

One of the most unpredicted results was the extremely low number of returning-visitors. Only a few of my long-term 'visitor-informants' came back to the museum, and none of the fifty surveyed visitors (who stated that they would return) were encountered again.

This raises a fundamental question that confronts *Lifetimes,* as well as other local history museums (who are usually less successful than this award-winning museum) - Why is it that, despite all its good intentions and sincere efforts, the museum service is not reaching its aspired goals in terms of visitor numbers and, especially, in terms of return visits?

The key to answering this question may lie in broadening the analysis of the *Lifetimes* experience, to include people's perception and consumption of museums in general, and of local history museums in particular. Proposing a much-expanded view of the local history museum, as a figurative meeting point of 'past', 'place' and 'people', the analysis is extended to explore local people's experience of - 'museums' (in general, and history museum in particular); 'past' (in general, and their local and family history in particular); and 'place' (in general, and their specific locality and community in particular), which is the essence of the following sections.

Section Three

Museum Consumption

Introduction

"What [visitors] *learn and perceive, and preserve as memory of that museal experience, becomes mobile and takes the museum beyond its own walls"*

(Crane, 2000: 2)

The core hypothesis underlying this section is that people's perception, consumption and overall experience of local history museums is strongly influenced by their perception, consumption and overall experience of museums in general. The analysis therefore examines the cultural phenomenon of contemporary museum visiting, establishing its role within current education, recreation and consumption practices, while highlighting its unique 'transitional' characteristics that distinguish it from other leisure activities. The section continues to include a detailed exploration of early museum experiences and their enduring effect on people's perception and practice of museum consumption.

Throughout the ages, museums have had an abiding association with knowledge, privilege and empowerment (see section one). By the same token, museum consumption has been linked with exclusive, privileged access and 'politics of exclusion' - be it the priests of the *Museia* temple; or the sacred band of scholars at the *Ptolemaic Mouseion*; the private viewers of the *Curiosity Cabinets* and *Proto Museums*, or the self-governed, paying public of the civilising, nineteenth century, *Grand Museums*.

The extensive development and growth of twentieth century museums, in terms of both physical expansion and ideological progression, created a new popularity of museums, attracting a wider public than ever before. There are currently between 2,500 and 3,000 registered museums in the UK, with an estimated average of, at least, 80 million visitors per annum [1]. Furthermore, according to the 'Museums & Galleries Commission' (1999) one third of the population in Britain visits museums and galleries on a regular basis [2], with an average of two to three visits per annum (Gosschalk & Sogno-Lalloz, 1999: 17).

The past decades have witnessed a growing body of literature on museums and their public, mainly in the form of market-research style visitor studies (cf. Pearce, 1989; Bitgood, 1991; Belcher, 1991; Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000; Bicknell & Farmelo, 1993;

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[1] *Source: Museum Association Website - www.museumassociation.org - Last Date of Access - December 30th 2003.*
[2] *Source: BBC News Broadcast, May 13th 1999.*

Miles & Zavala, 1994; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a, 1994b; Merriman, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, McManus, 1989b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994 - to name but a few of the numerous examples).

However, while museum visiting has become a more prevalent cultural phenomenon, museum visitors are still predominantly members of the higher social-classes. Several nation-wide surveys indicate that the majority of museum visitors tend to be of an above-average socio-economic group, as well as better educated and in better health. The non-visitors tend to be of a below-average socio-economic group, and often less educated, including the elderly, the disabled and the unemployed (Merriman, 1989b: 151-152; and Gosschalk & Sogno-Lalloz, 1999: 9-10).

Falk & Dierking (1992) have observed that most museum visitors come as part of either a school group, or a family group - "with parents between the ages of thirty and fifty, and children between the ages of eight and twelve" (1992: 20). Similarly, Hood (1983) has claimed that the majority of museum visitors are likely to be younger than the population in general, in the upper education, occupation and income groups, and active participants in other community and leisure activities (1983: 50).

Nevertheless, as both Hood (1983) and Merriman (1989a, 1991) emphasise, this kind of demographic data does not, and cannot, indicate the reasons *why* some adults choose to frequent museums while others do not. "Merely analysing demographics will not reveal what these groups value in their leisure experiences. Instead we need to focus on how individuals make decisions about the use of their leisure time and energy" (Hood, 1983: 51). This is the essence of the first core-module, which follows below.

Transitional Activities

"I sometimes wonder how many families have been introduced to museums because of the fascination of five-year-olds with dinosaurs"

(McManus, 1994: 83)

Museum visiting is commonly referred to, in both the media and the specialist literature, as a 'leisure activity'. However, this thesis defines and differentiates museum visiting as a 'transitional activity' that is neither leisure *per se*, nor labour *per se*. Located between recreation and education, between choice and chore, museum consumption is distinct from other leisure activities, as the following analysis will demonstrate.

Leisure Culture

"Britain has become a leisure society. More people have more time and more money to indulge leisure pursuits... This growth in leisure is related to wider social trends... Much leisure provision is commercialised and can therefore be seen as part of the growth of consumer society... access to leisure pursuits is unevenly distributed in the population"

(Abercrombie & Warde, 2002: 337)

Kelly (1982, 1983) emphasises the importance of viewing leisure as a learned behaviour. "We learn not only how to engage in activities and interact with others in leisure settings, but we learn culture-specific values and orientations for our leisure" (Kelly, 1982: 42). Correspondingly, Merriman (1991) claims that museum visiting is part of a wider package of cultured leisure activities, participated in, for the most part, by higher-status individuals, who are socialised into perceiving such activities as a legitimate and worthwhile use of their time (1991: 72). Thus, he argues, museum consumption becomes an expression of a cultivated lifestyle and is therefore linked with class-based socialisation. This clearly correlates with Veblen's (1899 / 1998) notion of 'conspicuous consumption' and, especially, with Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) concepts of 'habitus' and 'cultural capital', as well as his - 'theory of practice', in which "taste - cultural patterns of choice and preference - is seen as a resource which is developed by groups within the stratification system, in order to establish or enhance their location within the social order" (Slater, 1997: 150).

Bourdieu's work (1969, 1977, 1984) centres upon the mechanisms whereby class-based power and privilege are produced and proclaimed. Within this framework he analyses social life in terms of economic and symbolic power. The symbolic power derives from the possession and accumulation of cultural capital. This takes the form of - 'taste, manners and style' (which are an outcome of prolonged exposure to 'bourgeois culture') and the material manifestation of these cultivated dispositions. The latter kind of cultural capital acts as a medium of exchange with economic capital, since the acquisition of cultural capital and various educational qualifications leads to an advantage in both the job-market and the 'marriage-market'. "As a consequence of these different empowerment, individual classes come to develop and occupy a similar habitus" (Crompton, 1993: 173). Museums, according to Bourdieu, exemplify the successful production of a - 'consensual recognition of dominant culture', as well as a simultaneous exclusion of the lower classes from participation (Merriman, 1989b: 163).

Museum visiting, Bourdieu argues, like aesthetic appreciation, is socially determined and serves as a mechanism through which the privilege of cultural capital is transmitted from one generation to the next (Fyfe & Ross, 1996: 133). In other words, the museum and its displays are best understood by those who are predisposed by their habitus to acquire the cultural competence to do so. Non-visitors lack the skills to decipher the 'museum visiting code' and therefore exclude themselves from it as an inappropriate activity (see Merriman, 1989b: 159-171). Although Merriman's analysis (1989b, 1991) is inspired by Bourdieu's work, it criticises Bourdieu's theory for over-emphasising class distinction. Class alone, he claims, cannot explain museum visiting, as it is influenced by other structural and cultural factors. Instead, he suggests viewing museum visiting as an expression of cultural belonging - an 'incorporation into the ranks of the cultured', an act of consumption, equivalent to attending concerts and other cultured leisure activities

The following ethnographic account largely supports Merriman's conclusions, demonstrating the structural and cultural factors that influence my informants' decisions about the use of their leisure time and resources. However, the account also illustrates the need to define and differentiate museum visiting as a 'transitional activity', setting it apart from other forms of consumption and leisure.

The People's Choice

One of the key research methods employed in this study was an 'activities diary', which long-term informants were asked to fill in on a monthly basis (see section one and Appendix 2). The 'activities diary' not only facilitated an on-going contact, but also 'fuelled' our conversations and revealed my informants' leisure discourse and practice. Specific leisure perceptions and routines soon became evident, as did the clear distinction between - *Individual Leisure Activities* - that my informant, or members of their household did on their own, and - *Collective Leisure Activities* - which the informant's household did together, as a family unit.

Individual Leisure Activities - were manifestly age and class dependant, with the most affluent and educated young-adults displaying the greatest, and most costly, variety of leisure activities. These often involved various sport activities - from exercise classes, like yoga and step-aerobics, to gym workouts, outdoor sports and even ski-trips abroad, as well as special interest courses, such as languages, arts and crafts, or dancing lessons.

Angela's 'weekly routine' is a good example of this category. As a single museum-professional, in her mid-thirties, Angela's after-work leisure pursuits are plentiful:

> *"Monday is salsa. Tuesday is yoga. Wednesday is gym and meditation. Thursday is advanced yoga, that's where you stand on your head type of thing, and Friday is gym and meditation again. So that's my regular routine, I mean I wouldn't do any of those things if I was going out somewhere like a dance, or an art gallery, or if I have people round"*

The middle-class, middle-age informants, as well as most of the retired members of this socio-economic group, who are well educated and relatively affluent, were equally involved in various, albeit milder, forms of sport and special interest courses. These similarly comprised a range of arts and crafts classes, wine tasting, or cookery lessons, as well as other activities, such as participation in a local interest group or society.

Richard, a recently retired psychiatric nurse, in his mid-sixties, has outlined the 'weekly routine' he shares with his partner as follows:

> *"Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings we go swimming, that's one of our favourite physical pursuits, and we do a lot of walking as well. Monday is my French class in the afternoon. We also belong to the Croydon Society, which is rather geriatric [Laughs]"*
>
> *Q: "What do you do at the Croydon Society?"*
>
> *A: "The Croydon Society is, in a way, a sort of pressure group. We all have a keen interest in the town so we campaign for certain things, like more trees, better information, that sort of thing. We publish a magazine and we have various lectures in the Free Church Hall"*

Most of the adult informants from this well-educated, relatively affluent group enjoyed dining out, going to concerts, movies and plays, as well as specific exhibitions (typically in art galleries rather than museums). Many were also keen gardeners, spending much of their free time cultivating their gardens or visiting garden centres, as Rachel's account reveals:

"I'm a classic middle-aged, middle-class woman [Laughs]. I love gardening. I go to garden centres, I go to flower markets, I work in my garden. That's a big recreation for me. I go out to restaurants with friends, I visit relatives, I go to the theatre and cinema, and I go to art galleries"

Merriman (1991, 2000) has defined this better-educated, more-affluent, more-active group, with their wide range of leisure pursuits, as 'culture vultures', who are more willing, and have more opportunities to explore and participate in a variety of activities. "This does not mean, however, that they are indiscriminate in their leisure activities. Although the more active they are, the more they are likely to straddle taste cultures (for example, by both going to a football match and visiting a museum), there are definite class based trends in leisure activities... certain pursuits [are] much less likely to be participated in by the normally active and wide-ranging high status groups, such as bingo and darts" (Merriman, 2000: 73-74).

Less-affluent adult informants, regardless of their age, had less 'recreational resources', which affected the range of activities they could afford to do, or would consider doing. Such households often invested their 'recreational resources' in their children's activities. This is not to say that the more-affluent households did not invest in their children's activities, quite the contrary, only in their case there was less of a need to prioritise.

Children's *Leisure Activities* often involved sports (especially swimming and football), dance or music lessons, alongside language or computer courses, as well as various 'Beavers' or 'Guides' activities, as the following statements exemplify:

"Edward does Beavers and Judo, and Hanna learns the piano, and she has Guides... And they both swim"

(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)

"Laura has dancing lessons, and she goes swimming"

(Kristen, single mother from North Croydon)

"Karen and Michael have music lessons, and Nick has football, and all three of them go swimming"

(Andrew, Divorced father of three from South Croydon)

These after-school activities are often prioritised in terms of household income and routine, which usually result in parents not only paying for extra-curriculum activities, but also chauffeuring their children to and from the venues in which the activity takes place. This may explain the ambivalence expressed by most interviewed adults (especially those with school-age children) who simultaneously praised and criticised children's leisure activities, as Susie's remarks demonstrate:

> *"They've got a lot more to do nowadays, but it costs a lot more nowadays... I didn't have music lessons when I was younger, only at school. Lindsey and Jonathan both have music lessons, which costs. There's the horse riding, which Lindsey does, that costs. Leisure activities cost a lot more nowadays. I mean, when I was their age, I used to just go outside to play... I used to do Mum's shopping, so I would walk forty minutes there and forty minutes back. No way would you do that nowadays. No child would walk forty minutes to get the shopping or anything. They just wouldn't. If they do anything now you have to take them in the car, it's all - car"*

Alice, a married mother of two young children, also voiced an ambivalent view:

> *"I never did the things my son does, I mean, I would never have gone dancing and I would only swim at school. There was never any sort of 'after-school' activities. We used to go and play outside with our friends. You don't see that anymore, because everybody's so paranoid about their children getting hurt. There's no way I'd let my son go and play out... So to compensate the fact that they can't go and play out you take them to all these organised activities"*

These notions echo Allison James's study (2002) of what she terms the "late-modern city children" and their relationship with outdoor, public spaces. "For many children, especially those of the middle-class, the big 'outside' is conceived as a dangerous place to be and the child is introduced to this risk only gradually and in company. The outside world is inhabited by strangers and the communicative form is a threat rather than welcome... Children are simply 'not safe' on the streets" (James, et al, 2002: 51).

Rachel's account of her niece and nephew's leisure time activities articulated similar concerns:

"They've been offered a huge range of experiences: They've travelled abroad... They've done all sorts of activities to find out what they enjoy - gymnastics, horse riding, ballet, netball, basketball, football, you name it... But, at the same time, the level of fear about child-abuse has made things quite different from when I was a child. I mean, sometimes in the holidays I used to just get on a bus and go for miles without telling anybody, or go walking in the country, or go visit an aunt in a different town, and nobody was worried about what might happen to me. Parents are more worried about children being unsupervised these days, which is understandable, but it's also a shame... I think children need to be allowed to do things on their own, and explore things on their own."

In fact, many of the adults I interviewed, regardless of their age, gender or family status (including those who do not have any children of their own) seemed quite critical of children's leisure activities. Hamish, a young museum professional in his early thirties, who has worked extensively with school-age children at *Preston Manor*, prior to joining the *Lifetimes* team, provides a typical example:

"Children's leisure activities are a lot wider now, but in a way they're also more restrictive. I mean, we made our own entertainment. We played games and we'd put on plays for my parents, and do TV shows. I think in a way kids don't have that now. They're given computer games instead... Nowadays kids are taught that they should just sit back and be entertained, rather than do it themselves"

Greg, a young *Clocktower* employee and ardent musician, held a more critical view:

"Children's leisure activities? Well, they seem a little sad to me to be honest. I mean they're largely based on TV, video and computer games. There's no expression in it, you can sit there and play a computer game and all you're doing is playing a role, you're not actually doing anything constructive, you're not thinking, you're not creating, you're not doing anything other than developing your hand-eye co-ordination... TV has replaced religion as the 'opium of the masses'... It's "Instant Imagination", "Brain Candy"... Even reading - you're digesting someone else's thoughts, but you still have to picture it all, you still have to exercise <u>some</u> degree of imagination"

However, not all adults shared such stern views, as Angela's perspective exemplifies:

> *"Every generation thinks that their youth was a golden age and everything that came afterwards is a pale imitation, but I'm sure that in their own way children are having just as much fun nowadays"*

Stewart, expressed a similarly positive outlook:

> *"One of my interests in folklore is children's games and folklore, and from Victorian times adults have said that children don't play enough, that they - "Don't play like we did when we were children", but I think there's quite a lot that still goes on. Certain types of games have died of course, I mean you don't play traditional Victorian singing games anymore, they're probably regarded as a bit naff now"*

However, like many other informants, Stewart's fear for children's safety was manifest:

> *"And kids don't play in the streets anymore, thank God! We wouldn't have let Kate play in the street, we wouldn't have said -"Oh you need to run around, go play in the street, go get run over, or abducted by a stranger!" We have to make sure that children have a safe space to play in, you know, if you don't have a garden then you've got to take them to the park... but if you've got parents who do nothing but watch television, then the kids are going to do nothing but watch television and play on the computer"*

This kind of parental responsibility was often expressed in relation to the children's leisure activities, as well as to the household's *Collective Leisure Activities*. *Collective* leisure activities were referred to in all of my informant households as - 'family time' - regardless of any distinguishing demographic characteristics, such as: age, gender, class, ethnicity, education, occupation, lifestyle, and so on. Unsurprisingly, 'family time' involved spending 'quality time' with members of the household - be it a partner, or a child, or other members of the extended family like grandparents and grandchildren. 'Family time' normally centred on weekend days, Bank holidays and school holidays, when most (if not all) of the household members, and occasionally their extended family members as well, could be together. The 'collective' leisure activities that comprised the household's 'family time' were typically dedicated to - visiting relatives, going to the park or the cinema, dining out together, and, especially, going shopping.

"Sunday is our only free day. It's like a family day. We visit my family and his family, or we go to the pictures, or to the shops. It's a day we can do things together, as a family, so it's not taken up by other things"

(Erika, married mother of two from South Croydon)

The household's structure and demographic-profile (i.e. the number of household members, their age, gender and ethnicity, as well as the overall socio-economic status) seemed to have little, if any, effect on the chosen category of 'family time' activities. However, it had an apparent effect on the specific activity chosen within each category, in terms of its cost, venue and 'prestige'.

Households with young children, or school-age children often centred their choice of 'family time' activities on their children's preferences and needs, frequently allowing the children to choose both the venue and the activity (dining out, shopping, seeing a film) Outdoor activities, such as going to the park, or participating in various sport activities, alongside 'animal related' leisure activities, like visiting animal farms and petting-zoos, were also included, especially if the children were young:

"We always try to do something with the children on the weekend, even if it's just going to the park, or to an animal farm, things like that. Because we both work, our weekends often consist of either cleaning, or decorating, or doing all those boring things that you don't actually get round doing during the rest of the week. So that takes up part of it, but we also do try and do something with the kids..."

(Alice, married mother of two from North Croydon)

Museum visiting, with the children and, more importantly - *for the children*, often came into this category of 'family time'. Yet, it was never referred to as a recreational activity, or as a 'leisure choice'. Instead, it was frequently perceived as an educational activity, (see activity diary categories in Appendix 2) *for* the children, that was part of their 'parental responsibility' - to provide cultural and educational experiences that would benefit their child in a similar way to the child's other after-school activities such as: language courses, computer courses, music lessons, dancing lessons, swimming lessons and other sport activities.

Moussouri's study (1997a) similarly recognises education as the most frequently cited motivation for visiting a museum. The study also ascertains the prevalent perception of museum going as a distinct social event. "Visiting a museum was widely perceived as a 'day out' for the whole family, a special social experience, a chance for family members or friends to enjoy themselves separately and together... Some people seemed to view museum-going as an important marker event, taking place at certain phases of one's life, usually related to childhood (e.g. 'I was brought to the museum as a child, and now I'm bringing my child to the museum')" (Moussouri, 1997a, in: Falk & Dierking, 2000: 72).

Museum visiting can therefore be regarded as a kind of parental 'cultural provisioning', a 'transitional activity' - between recreation and education, between choice and chore. This sense of 'cultural obligation' and expected 'parental duty' was clearly manifest in people's consumption discourse, and often accompanied by an articulated sense of guilt. The majority of the interviewed visitors to *Lifetimes* and all of my long-term informants (staff and visitors alike) were somewhat apologetic about their museum visiting habits, often stating that they don't go to museums "as much as they <u>should</u>" [emphasis added]. Many were quick to add that they went to museums much more often when they were younger, or (especially) when their children were younger. In fact, all of the parents I spoke to, regardless of the current age of their children, were quick to acknowledge their awareness of, and compliance with, their 'parental duty' for this 'cultural provisioning', as Stewart's account illustrates:

> *"We certainly took Kate to all the major museums when she was younger. When she got to a stage where she was interested in fashion, or history, or whatever, if she was doing a topic at school... Whenever it was appropriate, we'd make an effort to go. It's one of those things you do as a parent"*

Lynn, a married mother of three from Central Croydon, echoed similar notions:

> *"Ken was doing dinosaurs at school, so we went to the Natural History Museum, and then the year after that Bethany had a science project, so we went to the Science Museum. You take your children to museums when they need to find something out... I think you take your children to the museums much more than you go on your own accord"*

For many parents, joining their child's school visits to museums was perceived as part of their 'parental duty' in this regard:

"They have school trips at least twice a year. So <u>of course</u> [emphasis added] *I join as an adult helper whenever I can"*

(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)

"I always join Sam's class as helper, whenever they go on a school trip, or a museum visit, or whatever"

(Sophie, single mother from North Croydon)

Museum visiting is then closely linked with educational and cultural activities, be it within the framework of a school visit, or as part of the household's family activities, during the weekend, or while on holiday. The latter represents another distinctive category, or 'framework' of museum consumption, especially while visiting out of town places, or going abroad. Museum visiting in this case becomes part of the visitors 'cultural obligation' as tourists:

"A month ago we were in Cornwall. We went to a stately home, and we went round the shops, and we also went to the local history museum. I mean, that's what you do when you go to another town, you go to the town museum. It's what you do when you're away, and there are several reasons for it - to fill up the time, but also to learn about the place that you're in"

(Stewart, married "empty nester" [3] from Central Croydon)

"We usually visit museums when we're away on holiday, especially if it's raining [Laughs]. I mean, it's just what you do as a tourist, isn't it, you go to the museums... It's just on your 'things-to-do' list"

(Erika, married mother of two from South Croydon)

This notion of a visiting a museum as part of a 'to do' list was also observed by Macdonald (2002a) "In the responses to a question about why they had come I was struck that visitors often seemed to employ the idea of a list or programme. For example: It's just on the list isn't it? ...We had a list of things to do and one of them was the Science Museum" (Macdonald, 2002a: 222-223).

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[3] *"Empty Nesters" is a term used by Gosschalk & Sogno-Lalloz (1999) to signify adults whose children have left the household.*

And yet, even in the context of a holiday, museum visiting is associated with learning - a means of 'cultural provisioning' for yourself and, especially, for your children:

> *"We always buy the book* [in the museum-shop] *because then you can read it on the way home and say - 'Oh, that was so-and-so', or - 'It wasn't made in the sixteenth century, it's a nineteenth century fake' or something like that. You can learn quite a lot from it, and your children benefit as well"*
>
> *(Stewart, married "empty nester" from Central Croydon)*

This notion of a 'parental duty' towards the children may well explain why so many of my informants, especially those with school-age children, made conscious efforts to participate in an activity that many of them later 'admitted' to dislike, as evident from the following comments:

> *"To be honest, I think museums are a bit boring. I mean, we took the kids to all the major ones of course..."*
>
> *(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

> *"I don't really like museums. It's too much like school, you know? Of course I took Sam to the big museums in London and all that..."*
>
> *(Sophie, single mother from North Croydon)*

> *"Well, between you and me - I think museums are really boring. I mean, on a scale of one-to-ten, going to a museum would be a minus-five for me [Laughs]. So when Jonathan said he wanted to go to the Science Museum I thought - 'Oh God. Well, I suppose I'll have to take him, because he wants to go, and it's important...' - I really didn't want to go but, of course, we did"*
>
> *(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

Du Berry's study (1994) revealed similar attitudes towards museum visiting, which was often viewed as - "worthy, and as having an educational purpose, but at the same time... very boring" (Du Berry, 1994, in: Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a: 61-62). Merriman's analysis of the reasons for, and constraints on museum visiting (1991, 2000) highlights Prince's distinction (1983) between *structural deterrents*, which include time, money, transport, and other aspects of physical access to museums; and *cultural deterrents*, which incorporate attitudes, images, and other aspects of mental and conceptual access that are influenced by various demographic features such as: age, class, education, etc.

(Merriman, 2000: 57-60). Defining museum consumption as a 'leisure activity', Merriman argues that the attitude towards a leisure activity will have the strongest influence on whether or not it will be undertaken. "In order for participation to occur, an activity has first to be seen as an appropriate leisure choice" (ibid.: 59). Thus, Merriman establishes *cultural constraints* as the most crucial factors affecting museum visiting.

While the overall conclusions of this study certainly endorse Merriman's findings, some of the ethnographic evidence indicates that structural constraints still play an important role in affecting people's perception and practice of museum consumption. For many of my informants, especially those with young children, who live in the southern parts of Croydon, a museum visit in central London can entail more than two hours of travel, which often means that - to use Susie's phrase - "the children are tired and fed-up before you even get to the museum". Such an excursion can also be quite expensive, as Jane points out:

> *"With the travel costs, the entry fees, lunch, souvenirs... you can easily spend fifty pounds in one afternoon. A day at a local animal farm costs nothing. It's just a short drive away, in the comfort of your own car, and the kids love it. They can run around and touch the animals. You don't have to follow them around, or watch them all the time, or tell them what to do"*

Jane's account reveals another aspect of museum visiting that adds to the perception of this activity as a demanding 'parental chore' - the need to account for, and control, the child's behaviour during the museum visit, as well as 'guide' their experience, in terms of instructing them where to go, what to do and, especially, what not to do.

The perception of this 'parental chore' as a fairly tasking ordeal may explain the lack of enthusiasm among many of my 'parent-informants' to frequently engage in this activity, as well as account for the difference between their *declared* museum-visiting practice (in which most informants stated that they visit museums at least three times a year) and their *observed* museum-visiting practice, which for many included only a few school or work related visits and no individual, or family visits, throughout the fieldwork period. Nevertheless, *all* of my 'parent-informants' fulfilled their 'parental duty' towards their children, either by joining school visits as parent-helpers, or by taking their children to the "big museums" in central London (which typically include - the *Science Museum*, the *Natural History Museum*, the *British Museum*, and the *Victoria & Albert Museum*)

at least once during their primary-school years, and early secondary-school years. As suggested previously, this may be due to a sense of 'parental obligation' towards a kind of 'cultural provisioning', which is akin to Daniel Miller's *Theory of Shopping* (1998) and in particular to his concept of 'love and sacrifice' through household provisioning. Here, parents are willing to sacrifice their time, money and energy in order to engage in an often-demanding (both physically and mentally) 'transitional activity' that is neither 'leisure' *per se*, nor 'labour' *per se*, and that many of them may not have otherwise chosen to participate in. The perception of museum visiting as a cultured, worthwhile activity that is beneficial for the children's education, cultivation and socialisation, provides the core motivation for most parents (and grandparents), as well as for many teachers to visit museums, outweighing the various structural and cultural deterrents they may experience.

However, not all visitors fall into the category of parents, grandparents and educators. Different people choose to visit museums, or avoid them, for a variety of different reasons. Moussouri's doctoral study (1997a) divides visitors' cited reasons for museum visiting into six general categories that reflect the "functions a museum is perceived to serve in the social / cultural life of visitors: education, entertainment, social event, life cycle, place, and practical issues" (Moussouri, 1997a, in: Falk & Dierking, 2000: 72). Similarly, Miles (1998) highlights the variety of motivations visitors might have for visiting a museum, including: instructing or entertaining themselves (or their families); showing off their knowledge to the members of their visitor-group; using the restaurant facilities; or simply getting out of the rain (1998: 25).

Hood's study (1983, 1989) demonstrates how different groups of visitors value different criteria in making leisure choices. "The criteria included having the opportunity to be with people, to do something worthwhile, to feel comfortable and at ease with one's surroundings, to have a challenge of new experiences, to learn, and to participate actively in leisure events" (Hood, 1989, in: Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2000: 22).

Gosschalk & Sogno-Lalloz's survey (1999) emphasises the effect of age and, especially, life stage on the motivation (or lack thereof) for museum visiting: "There are large differences in opinions, attitudes towards, and use of museums and galleries between young people, students, young adults without children, families, couples without children, 'empty nesters'... and the elderly" (1999: 12).

Moussouri's analysis (1997b) of family visits to museums reveals similar differences between the 'agendas' - as she refers to them - of different family members, according to their age, and their role in the family group (Moussouri, 1997b, in: Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2000: 15-16). Robert Rapoport & Rohan Rapoport's (1975) work on leisure and the family life cycle, looks at "the sort of leisure activities that different age groups are likely to do, given the expectations appropriate to their particular stage in the life cycle" (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975, in: Merriman 1989a: 157).

Miles (1998) maintains that the decision to visit a museum (or participate in any other leisure-time activity) involves three main factors that are mentally evaluated, and balanced against one another: (a) the amount of effort required (in terms of time, money energy, and so on); (b) the magnitude and value of the rewards obtained; and (c) the likelihood, or otherwise, that the experience will be successful / enjoyable (1998: 26). Likewise, Falk & Dierking (1992) claim that "the decision to visit a museum involves matching personal and social interests and desires with the anticipated physical context and the associated activities of a museum. Two important considerations in leisure-time decision-making are the investment of time and money, and the importance attached to the activity, in short, the costs and the benefits of any given choice" (1992: 13).

Trevelyan's survey (1991) focuses on the attitudes and perceptions of non-visitors, emphasising the structural and cultural constraints on museum visiting - from concerns about physical access and cost, to an overall unease about the museum's perceived 'reverential atmosphere', as well as its lack of appeal as an appropriate leisure choice: "Apart from appealing to children and elderly people, museums were expected to have most appeal to 'boffin' type intellectuals, people with a very specific interest, people with nothing better to do, tourists, yuppies and mothers determined to educate their children... Specific factors contribute to the overall lack of interest in visiting museums. One of the most important was the entrenched image of museums as being drab, quiet... boring, dusty, gloomy places" (Trevelyan, 1991: 24-25 and 34).

The following core-module addresses people's diverse perceptions, preconceptions and expectations of museums and museum visiting, which influence their motivations for, and practice of museum consumption (or, in some cases, non-consumption).

Perception & Practice

"Museums are places where dead things are kept to be remembered..."

(Sherman, 1987: 78)

"...you think of museums as like dingy places with different kind of bits"

(Trevelyan, 1991: 3)

Merriman's study (1991, 2000) demonstrates the correlation between people's image of museums (and especially their association of museums with certain categories, such as - *'School'*, *'Temple'*, or *'Monument to the Dead'*) to the frequency of their museum visits, showing, for example, that those who tend not to visit museums have much less positive images of museums than those who do visit them (Merriman, 1991: 63).

Following Merriman's premise and findings, specific attitude-measuring questions (which were originally introduced in Merriman's 1991 postal survey) were incorporated into the interview format that was used for both the survey of visitors to the *Lifetimes* museum (see Appendix 1) and the long-term informants' interviews (see Appendix 3).

An overwhelming majority of the people I interviewed associated museums with 'School' or 'Library', frequently adding that museums are places of, and for - learning. The association of museum visiting with schooling, education and 'parental obligation', may account for the widespread perception that museums are, and ought to be, primarily 'for children'. This was especially evident in people's descriptions of the kind of museum they would create, and the audiences they would create it for (see final interview in Appendix 3):

Q: "If you had your own museum, what would it be like?
Who would it be for?"

A: "It would be for children of course, and it would have a bit of everything really. Things that they could touch and hold..."

(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)

A: "It would be for children, something that's fun, but also educational"

(Andrew, Divorced father of three from South Croydon)

A: "Oh gosh, that's a hard question! There would be lots of 'hands-on' stuff, you know things they can touch and fiddle around with, but what would I put in it? I'm not sure"

Q: "Would your museum be for children, or for grown-ups, or both?"

A: "Oh, for children. For children and teenagers, you know, youngsters... But what would I put in it? How things work? Animals? You know, like dinosaurs, or something... It has to be interesting to them, or it just won't work. If you've got their interest and their attention and they enjoy it, they'll learn so much more. So whatever it is it'll be interesting and hands-on"

(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)

Even interviewees who did not have children of their own expressed a similar attitude, where children were the 'obvious' potential audience of a museum:

Q: "If you had your own museum, what would it be like?
Who would it be for?"

A: "It would be for kids, of course, and it would have loads of toys. It would be sort of toy history, and toys that they could actually play with as well"

(Dorothy, an avid toy collector from North Croydon)

A: "It would be really interactive with lots of hands-on stuff for children. A <u>fun</u> place!"

(James, a college student from North Croydon)

While most interviewees mentioned children, as their obvious museum-audience, consequently emphasising a 'hands-on', 'educational-but-fun', child-oriented approach, there were a few informants, usually the museum professionals, who envisioned an adult-oriented museum that represented and interested *them* personally, much like Greg, a young *Clocktower* employee and ardent musician:

"I suppose it would be some sort of musical museum. I'm afraid it would be a rather selfish pursuit really. I don't see it being for children, or for the benefit of mankind unfortunately"

Rose, a keen ceramics collector, expressed a similar attitude:

> *"I'd like it to be a ceramics museum, nineteen twenties, nineteen thirties ceramics, only because it's my interest... I mean, it wouldn't really be a children-oriented museum, I mean I don't think it would interest them"*

Many of the adult-oriented 'museum-creators' began to describe their museum by stating that they - "know museums are for children, but their museum isn't..." and that theirs was a more personal museum, just for them. Angela's account provides a good example:

> *"If it was just for me, I would have like lovely art in it, where there's no need for lengthy intellectual discourse about it. Where people could just come in and be totally uplifted, you know, that kind of inspiring experience... I just like the idea of something that isn't really programmed, where you don't really need to think about it too much, you know? Just a sensory thing, where you don't actually have to do anything, you just <u>be</u>"*

The preference of a non-didactic experience is an important element of gallery visiting, which, in turn, provides a further, useful distinction between visitors and non-visitors.

<u>Visitors, Non-Visitors & Gallery Goers</u>

Visitor studies' research and literature typically divide the public into two basic groups - 'visitors' and 'non-visitors' - often proceeding to isolate various sub-divisions within the museum-visitor section, so to create a 'continuum' or 'spectrum'. Marilyn Hood (1983) divides the 'museum consumers spectrum' into five, distinctive visitor categories - *<u>frequent</u>* (defined as: 'visiting museums three or more times a year'); *<u>regular</u>* ('visiting once or twice a year'); *<u>occasional</u>* ('last visited between one and four years ago'); *<u>rare</u>* ('last visited four or more years ago'); and finally the *<u>non-visitors</u>*, which Hood defines as - 'never visited a museum'; (Hood, 1983, in: Merriman, 1989b: 150-153).

Employing Hood's division, Merriman (1989b, 1991) emphasises the differences between these distinct museum-visitor categories, observing, for example, that "the more frequent the visiting, then, the more specific the reason for the visit, and the less frequent the visiting, the more likely that it was undertaken for casual reasons not related to the museum's aims, or with the school when the visitor had no choice" (1989b: 153).

Merriman also demonstrates the clear differences between visitors and non-visitors in their perception of museums, with most non-visitors having a negative view of museums as unpleasant and unwelcoming in their atmosphere, often linking them to 'monuments to the dead' (Merriman 1989a: 159-161). The reason for this, he states, is to be "sought in the way in which people are socialised into museum use (or non-use)" (ibid.: 161).

While these divisions, and observations, can prove extremely revealing and effective, they are still bound to the basic, traditional dyad of 'museum visitors' and 'non-visitors'. The ethnographic evidence of this study suggests an expansion of the conventional dyad to include a third, distinct category of consumers, which I define as - 'gallery goers'.

The 'gallery goers' are as critical of contemporary museums as the non-visitors. [4] However, while non-visitors tend to perceive museums as dull, boring - 'dead' places, the perception shared by many 'gallery goers' is often that museums have become too child-centred and didactic, as well as too entertaining - at the expense of the more 'spiritual' experience they claim to seek. Much like the non-visitors, 'gallery goers' feel out of place in most contemporary museums, consequently shifting their interest to art galleries, which are far less didactic, and therefore provide a much more 'open-ended', individualistic, emotional (or even 'spiritual') experience, as Angela's statement illustrates:

> *"Art galleries are still very <u>adult</u> places by and large, especially in London, where there's such a variety. For me fine art is a pure, direct connection between your senses and your emotions. It might involve the intellect, but it more often involves the subconscious. It's a very different experience than a museum visit"*

Zolberg (1994) highlights a similar distinction between art galleries and museums - "As a rule, science, natural history, and history museums are much more oriented to the general public than to professional scientists or historians. They devote a great deal of attention to educational programs and, until recently, less to collecting 'genuine' specimens. Art museums, on the other hand, appeal to artists, art historians, collectors, and a well-educated public because they display 'authentic' works" (1994: 50).

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[4] *"Non-visitors" were defined in this study as individuals who have not visited a museum in over a decade or more. Employing Hood's definition seemed impractical, as it is extremely rare nowadays to encounter an individual who resides in London and has <u>never</u> visited a museum.*

The authenticity of the objects and art works on display creates an almost 'sacred aura' (see Orvell, 1989; and Duncan, 1995) that distinguishes the experience of visiting an art gallery from that of visiting a museum. What's more, it distinguishes those who visit the gallery, as a better-educated, more-refined, self-selected elite (Zolberg, 1994: 50), thereby providing a means of cultural capital and class distinction that is particularly valuable in light of the current popularity, and accessibility of museums.

Jeff's cultural consumption, in terms of museum and gallery visiting, exemplifies the 'selective' predisposition that is prevalent among the 'gallery goers' group:

> *"I usually go to see very specific exhibitions... There are many places I would <u>never</u> go"*
>
> *Q: "Where would you <u>never</u> go?"*
>
> *A: "I would never go to somewhere like the Natural History Museum, or the Science Museum. I wouldn't go to places that are sort of child-orientated"*
>
> *Q: "Where do you usually go?"*
>
> *A: "I go to art galleries quite a lot, probably every other month or so, and that isn't just for specific exhibitions. I will go and look at the areas that I'm interested in, even though they don't ever change, I still do see new stuff, you know, the things that you haven't actually perceived before"*

Rebecca, a married mother of two from South Croydon, demonstrates a similar perception (and practice) of gallery visiting:

> *"I am very interested in contemporary modern art, so that is the kind of exhibition I will tend to go to. I like things that have a deep impact, things that make people think, anything that causes a lot of friction or contention. I'm intrigued by that."*
>
> *Q: "If you had your own museum, what would it be like?*
>
> *A: "It would be in the centre of London, in a really beautiful, minimalist gallery and it would be for contentious contemporary art pieces... I want my museum to be fascinating and inspiring, you know, really meaningful"*

Many 'gallery goers' stressed the importance of visiting the art gallery on their own, thereby creating a more personal, reflective experience:

> *"I really enjoy my own company and I've never outgrown that. I never get lonely and I never get bored. So when I've got a free day that's what I do, I go to a gallery and then out to lunch. And I always go on my own. I don't want company when I go to a gallery. It's a very personal thing"*
>
> *(Rebecca, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

> *"I usually go on my own. I find it quite hard to concentrate if I go with somebody else, there's too much 'noise', too much distraction... I find I enjoy it more going on my own. It's more peaceful, more personal"*
>
> *(Jeff, single, avid ceramics collector from South Croydon)*

It is interesting to note that both 'gallery goers' and non-visitors have a tendency to use the 'Church' or 'Temple' metaphors in their associative discourse. However, while the non-visitors attribute temple-like characteristics to museums (which are perceived as uninviting and forbidding), 'gallery goers' attribute them to art galleries, thereby highlighting the 'spiritual' element of their gallery visiting experience, as Angela's interview reveals:

> *Q: "Which of the following do museums remind you of most -*
> *'Monument to the Dead' / 'Church' or 'Temple' / 'Community Centre' / 'School' or 'Library' / 'Department Store' / 'Other'?"*
>
> *A: "For a fine art gallery, the nearest thing I could say is 'Church' or 'Temple' and I don't mean that in a solemn way. I'm thinking of something completely non-intellectual, almost spiritual. For a museum, I don't know. I think the Natural History Museum is a 'School', but a kind of 'Play-School' you know?"*

The widespread association of art galleries with ceremonial monuments, such as palaces or temples, is neither surprising, nor new. In fact, from the eighteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century, art museums and galleries were deliberately designed to resemble them (see Duncan, 1995: 7-8). Like most ritual spaces, art museums are culturally designated and differentiated from the 'day-to-day' time and space outside.

This creates a certain mood and conduct expectation, endorsing a cultivated practice that is learned, embodied and acted out through sensory and bodily experiences (see Duncan, 1995: 10-12; Meethan, 1996: 179; Slater, 1997: 162). Thus, the art museum becomes a liminal space of enlightenment, providing a special frame or mode of consciousness - "outside of, or 'betwixt-and-between' the normal... [Where] individuals can step back from the practical concerns and social relations of everyday life and look at themselves and their world with different thoughts and feelings" (Turner, 1977, in: Duncan, 1995: 11).

The desire to experience a cultural setting that is distinctly different from the day-to-day working environment (and therefore would not be mentally linked to 'work' issues) was particularly prevalent among the staff members, as the following statements illustrate:

Q: "How often do you visit museums?"

A: "Well, to be honest, I try to avoid them most of the time. You see, the trouble is whenever I do visit a museum I go in there and I look at the lighting, and the security, and the labels, I look at the presentation and the interpretation, it just becomes 'work' really"

(Tanya, young museum-staff member)

A: "I usually go to art galleries rather than museums, because when I go into a museum I'm thinking - 'this is what they're like', or 'this is how they present things', or 'this is the label length' - I'm thinking about work, whereas if I want an exhibition experience, particularly one that is detached from work, I will go for fine art"

(Faith, young museum-staff member)

Once again, it is interesting to note the similarities of perception between the visitors, the non-visitors and the 'gallery goers', all of whom tend to see museum visiting as more of a cultural, or educational 'chore', than a 'leisure choice'. Susie Fisher's research (1990a, 1990b) offers similar findings, confirming that the overall perception of museums among non-visitors is not dissimilar to that prevalent among visitors, and that the core distinction between the two groups lies in their sense of duty (and guilt) towards museum visiting. This further reinforces the unique 'transitional' characteristic of museum consumption, which distinguish it from other leisure activities, locating it between recreation and education, between 'choice' and 'chore'.

Museum Visiting & Shopping

"The Bluewater Park Shopping Centre in Kent and the Trafford Centre in Manchester each attract over 30 million visitors a year - more than all of our national museums... [Such centres] are in tune with a car culture in providing free parking. They are free to enter, they provide an appearance of safety... and they are open long hours every day of the week. They provide for a variety of activities: retail, eating and entertainment... Shopping is now the second most popular leisure activity in the UK, after watching television... It is in direct competition for the audience to our museums and galleries"

(Black, 2002: 36-37)

Indeed, what most of my informants (visitors, non-visitors, and 'gallery goers' alike) seemed to truly enjoy, as a 'real' recreational activity, was shopping. Black (2002) provides an extensive list of 'structural incentives' for visiting shopping centres. Yet, such incentives are by no means exclusive to shopping venues. In fact, many contemporary museums (perhaps *because* of their competition with retail venues) offer a similar range of 'structural comforts' (see Hooper-Greenhill, 1992).

How then does shopping differ from museum visiting? After all, the physical experience of 'visiting a shop' - walking round the shop's space, gazing and occasionally examining the merchandise on display, is not far removed from visiting a museum, which similarly involves walking round an exhibition space, gazing and occasionally examining the objects on display, or engaging in what Treinen has termed - 'active laziness' and 'cultural window-shopping' (Graf & Treinen, 1983, in: Graf, 1994: 79).

These two consumption activities can be equally taxing in physical terms, and yet shopping was usually perceived by my informants as an enjoyable 'leisure choice', while museum visiting was often perceived as a demanding cultural, or educational 'chore'. I suggest that the answer lies in three core elements, which are part of most shopping experiences, yet missing from most museum visiting experiences, namely - *Choice*; *Tactility*; and what I term - *Potential Ownership*.

Choice: Shopping nearly always involves a high degree of variety and choice - from the customer's choice of *which* shop they visit, to their movement around the shop's space, and what they choose to look at, as well as what they choose to purchase (or not). [5]

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[5] *This is notwithstanding that most shopping is for everyday provisioning - goods that are required and repetitive.*

Museum visiting, for nearly all of my informants, was not really a 'choice', but rather a 'cultural chore' that they felt they *should* do for their children's (and their own) benefit. The choice of *which* museum to visit was often 'dictated' by the topic the children were studying at school, or by a program the children saw on television (which recommended a specific exhibition). In any event, the museum visit was often more 'for the children' then anyone else. The museum visit itself involves an even lesser degree of choice, seeing that where you go, what you see, what you do, and what you do not do, is often 'dictated' by the museum in terms of - layout, suggested 'routes' and activities, as well as the overall 'decorum' that is expected (and at times demanded) within such a setting.

Tactility: touching and handling the objects on display is quite often part of a shopping experience, yet it is not always possible to incorporate it into a museum experience, which then becomes an essentially *visual* practice that is lacking in terms of the tactile, tangible experience it can provide. Which leads to the most important element of these two, fundamentally different, consumption experiences -

Potential Ownership: or, in other words, the possibility to purchase, take away, and own, a tangible memento of the display. While the shopping experience is *all about* potential ownership - through the processes of selection, acquisition and appropriation - the museum experience is completely devoid of this element, as it cannot offer its 'clients' any kind of *physical* acquisition other than through the museum's souvenir shop.

The Souvenir Shop

"The Acquisition of souvenirs is not just the collection of objects but of memories and, by extension the experiences that bond those memories"

(Smith & Reid, 1994: 885)

"People like to be reminded of special moments and events, and a souvenir serves as such a reminder; indeed, the word itself means 'to remember'..."

(Gordon, 1986: 135)

Purchasing a memento at the museum's souvenir shop plays a central role in the museum experience, as it offers a means of 'compensation' for the evident lack of choice, tactility and ownership. By providing the missing tangible element, as well as freedom of choice and potential purchase, the souvenir acts as a 'transitional object'

between the visit and its appropriation. Most visitors, according to Falk & Dierking (1992) "make a connection between museum collections and gift selections, and purchase items that will be suitable reminders of their museum experience" (1992: 90).

The desire to 'take away something tangible' - as a memento of their visit to *Lifetimes* - was manifest in both the surveyed-visitors group, and the long-term informants group, regardless of their age, gender, class, or any other demographic characteristic. Most of the visitors I encountered asked for a 'print-out' of the computerised stories they have read or, more commonly, a 'print-out' of their quiz questions and quiz results. Unfortunately, copyright laws meant that such 'print-outs' were normally unavailable.

The visitors' disappointment was deepened by the lack of a 'proper' museum shop. Although the *Clocktower* centre had a designated souvenir shop at the time [6], it was not a museum shop *per se*, but rather a general 'Croydon Souvenir Shop', selling various local publications and mementoes, along with nondescript calendars and greeting cards. Specific museum-related items (following the more popular, more 'fashionable' temporary-exhibitions, such as the *'Monster Creepy Crawlies'* exhibition; and the successful *'Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies'* exhibition) were occasionally on sale. These items were sought after by a wide variety of visitors, who were eager to have a souvenir of the exhibition. At other times, the shops' main customers were the younger, school-age, museum visitors, whose attention was normally drawn to various, inexpensive mementoes, bearing the *Clocktower* centre's insignia, such as key-rings, bookmarkers, rulers, pencils, erasers, and so on.

The importance of the written words that are imprinted on souvenirs (which often bear the name of the place that the souvenir is meant to represent) is emphasised by both Gordon (1986) and Macdonald (2002b), who maintain that the place name can 'magically' transform an object, empowering and 'sacrilising' it (Gordon, 1986: 139; Macdonald, 2002b: 101-102). This notion echoes the sacredness and 'contagious magic' ascribed to miraculous relics and mementoes of religious-pilgrimage sites, such as: "dirt, holy water, holy oils, stones, plants and small pieces of shrines" (Belk, 1995: 33). The souvenir then becomes a 'tangible memory' of both place and experience, simultaneously symbolising both the museum and the museum-visit. Stewart (1994) similarly emphasises the capacity of objects, and especially souvenirs, to serve as 'traces' of authentic experiences (1994: 135). As a material manifestation of the museum

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[6] *The souvenir shop was later closed, due to its low turnover.*

and the museum-visit, the souvenir can also serve as a kind of 'proof' that the visitor has actually - 'been there, done that, bought the souvenir' (Hitchcock & Teague, 2000: 3).

And yet, souvenir shops are typically viewed in the media and the academic literature as a negative outcome of mass consumer culture (cf. Hewison, 1987; and Belk, 1995). History and heritage museum-souvenir shops are especially criticised as places where "subtext of heritage reproductions, replicas and memorabilia, highlights the possibility of buying the past off the shelf" (Hewison, 1987: 139). Horne (1984), Wright (1985), Lowenthal (1985, 1998), Walsh (1992) and many others, have voiced similar criticisms, accusing history and heritage museums, and their souvenir shops, of promoting the 'marketing of the past' as a commodified form of history (see section one).

What these critics seem to overlook is the significance of consumption as a means of appropriating both the past and the museum visit. "Most critics assume that the relation of persons to objects is in some way vicarious, fetishistic or wrong" (Miller, 1987: 11). Offering an alternative view of consumption, counter to its widespread critique as materialistic, Miller employs Marx's concepts of 'work' and 'production' to demonstrate the positive traits of consumption. Miller argues that consuming, as an act of agency, plays an imperative role in our appropriation of the material environment. Our secondary relationship with purchased goods or artefacts enables us, according to Miller, to overcome the object's alienation. By investing it with sentimental value and meaning we appropriate the object, which then becomes part of our personal possessions and identity. This complex process is defined by Miller as 'work invested by the consumer upon the purchased object', translating it from an alienable to an inalienable condition: "From being a symbol of estrangement and price value to being an artefact invested with particular inseparable connotations" (ibid.: 190). This process is manifest in both, the case of museum visitors and their souvenirs, and, especially, the case of individual collectors and their collections. Belk (1995) stresses the creative element of collecting, similarly regarding it as an act of production. "Collectors create, combine, classify and curate the objects they acquire in such a way that a new product, the collection, emerges... In this process they also produce meanings" (1995: 55). Gell's *Theory of Art & Agency* (1998) advocates a similar notion, where social agency can be invested in, or emanate from things, which then act as 'secondary agents' or 'indexes' to the intentions of a 'primary agent', such as a museum visitor, or a collector.

Collectors' Lot

Objects, Memories & Knowledge

"Nearly one in every three people [in North America and Europe]... define themselves as collectors, and see collecting as a significant element in their lives"

(Pearce, 1995: XI)

The way in which people perceive, consume and appropriate museums is influenced (among other things) by their personal interests and specific leisure-pursuit preferences. The initial expectation, during the early stages of fieldwork, was of finding that the avid collectors among my 'staff' and 'visitor' informants, especially those who had a keen interest in collecting objects and artefacts, would prove keen museum visitors as well. This preliminary expectation was not met. Instead, the study's findings highlighted the importance of acknowledging and distinguishing between various 'kinds' of collectors, namely - 'object' collectors; 'memory' collectors; and 'knowledge' collectors - seeing that the members of each 'collector category' (alongside members of the 'non-collector' category) expressed a unique, and at times dramatically different, perspective and imagery of museums, which lead to distinct museum visiting (or non-visiting) practices.

As evident from the ethnographic data and analysis presented thus far, many members of the 'non-collector' category (including visitors, non-visitors and 'gallery goers') seem to perceive museums in their disciplinarian, Victorian form - mentally linking them with a school or a library, and often emphasising their cultural and educational role, or value.

Most members of the 'object' collector category (which included a few 'gallery goers') seem to perceive museums in their ancient *Mausoleum* form - mentally linking them (for better or worse) with a church or a temple, or a 'monument to the dead', and frequently highlighting the authentic and aesthetic qualities of their displayed objects. While this finding was fairly predictable, it was surprising to discover that many of the 'object' collectors I met generally disliked museums, often stating that they find them 'boring and dull'. The only exception was when the museum presented the same kind of objects or artefacts, as they collect themselves, in which case they would regard the museum, or the specific exhibition within the museum, as a kind of 'reference catalogue' to their own collection. Mentally linking their visit with 'cultural window-shopping', they viewed it as a chance to educate themselves further about their topic of interest.

A possible explanation for this widespread attitude among 'object' collectors may be found in the nature of traditional 'object' collecting, which centres on touch and physical handling, as well as on a complex process of search, purchase and appropriation, which in turn creates a sense of ownership, mastery and control (cf. Stewart, 1994; Pearce, 1992, 1994, 1995; Elsner & Cardinal, 1994; Belk, 1995; Martin, 1999; and Blom, 2003). Thus, the collection provides its owner with an "omnipotent sense of mastery, allowing manipulation of time, space, and activity, within this 'home made universe'" (Stewart, 1994: 163). Such elements are seldom available to museum visitors, which may well explain why 'object' collectors rarely visit museums, opting instead to spend their leisure time bargain-hunting for objects in shops, markets, car-booth sales, and so on, as Dorothy's interview demonstrates. Dorothy is a part-time *Clocktower* employee, who lives on her own in North Croydon. An avid collector of toys, in her late forties, she is proud of her life-long hobby:

Q: "Would you define yourself as a collector?"

A: "God yes, obsessive collector [Laughs]. I love toys, I've always loved toys, especially Action Men. I always preferred boys' toys to girls' toys, you know, guns and things. When I was ill I'd say to me Mum - 'bring me something'. And the idea was that she brought me a toy, a little plastic one... I still got them all and I still collect little toys, little moveable toys. They're quite expensive to buy in the shops, but if they turn up at a jumble sale I buy them. I just hunt around for these things"

Q: "How would you spend a typical weekend?"

A: "Jumble sale, ten thirty Saturday, then off to me Mum for lunch and a little natter, then she might come with me to the two o'clock jumble sale..."

Q: "Two a day then?"

A: "Two a day, yes, might even be three [Laughs]. It's an obsession, it really is. It's this hunting for bargains - you don't even know what you're hunting for really, but it's just this looking, you know? It's such great fun"

Dorothy's perception and practice of museum visiting, typifies the 'non-participant' tendency that was prevalent among the 'object' collectors I met:

Q: "Which of the following do museums remind you of most - 'Monument to the Dead' / 'Church' or 'Temple' / 'Community Centre' 'School' or 'Library' / 'Department Store' / 'Other'?"

A: "For a lot of them I would have to say - 'Monument to the Dead' - I mean, most of them are just so dull and boring"

Q: "How often do you visit museums?"

A: "I don't know, once or twice a year maybe? Not very often I'm afraid"

Q: "When was your last visit?"

A: "Last year, when I was on holiday"

Q: "Which museum did you go to?"

A: "I went to the toy museum of course! [Chuckles]"

Q: "Did you enjoy it?"

A: "Yes, well, I love toys"

Rose, another *Clocktower* employee, who resides with her husband in Central Croydon, provides a further example. As a keen ceramics collector, Rose's leisure time activities, as well as her perception and practice of museum visiting, are very similar to Dorothy's:

Q: "How would you spend a typical weekend?"

A: "Most weekends my husband and I go to antique shops and antique fairs, anything connected to ceramics really. Unfortunately you don't find many ceramics at car-booth sales anymore, only antique shops and fairs"

Q: "How often do you visit museums?"

A: "Two to three times a year"

Q: "When was your last visit?"

A: "Last May"

Q: "Which museum did you go to?"

A: "The Stoke-on-Trent Museum. We went to see the Wedgwood Exhibition"

Q: "Which of the following do museums remind you of most - 'Monument to the Dead' / 'Church' or 'Temple' / 'Community Centre' / 'School' or 'Library' / 'Department Store' / 'Other'?"

A: "For me, I suppose it would be - 'Monument to the Dead'"

The association of museums with the 'monument to the dead' imagery reveals another aspect of individual 'object' collecting, which may account for the lesser appeal of an institutional collection - the issue of completion. Belk & Wallendorf (1994) highlight the paradox between the collector's simultaneous 'desire for closure', which is reflected in an almost 'obsessive-compulsive' pattern of behaviour, like spending vast amounts of money, or travelling to another country just to purchase an object for the collection, thereby ensuring its completion; and 'fear of closure' - which is manifested in a variety of 'strategies', such as redefining the collection and setting higher goals, as a means of ensuring that the collection is never complete. "For if one is a collector and there is nothing left to collect, who is one then?" (Belk, 1995: 80). Museums, in this sense, could be perceived as a 'mausoleum' of a completed (or 'dead') collection - "a kind of entombment, a display of once lived activity" (Elsner & Cardinal, 1994: 155).

The next category groups 'memory' collectors together with 'experience' collectors (despite their fundamental distinction - namely that 'memory' collectors aim to preserve experiences and events that have already taken place in their lives, while 'experience' collectors seek to add experiences and events that they can later recall and preserve), seeing that the two 'collector types' display a similar attitude towards museum visiting. Many members of this combined group seemed to perceive museums in their 'egalitarian' form - mentally linking them with a community centre. And yet, most of them expressed the same kind of 'non-participant' attitude towards museum visiting as the 'object' collectors did, often dismissing museums as 'uninteresting' or 'irrelevant'. Once again, the only exception was when the museum's presentation was directly related to the collectors' own life-experiences and memoirs. The explanation for this prevalent attitude among 'memory' and 'experience' collectors may, once again, be found in the nature of 'memory and experience' collecting and its appropriation process.

Strongly linked to Campbell's (1987) concept of 'modern hedonism', and the notion of 'individualism', which endorses self-development through enriching life-experiences, 'memory' and, in particular, 'experience' collecting exemplify the ideal of 'self as owner' (Macpherson, 1962, in: Clifford, 1988: 217) and the perception of identity as a kind of wealth - of objects, knowledge, memories and experiences (Clifford, 1988: 218).

Most museums are unable to generate the degree of familiarity and identification that meets the wishes of the 'memory' and 'experience' collectors, unless, like Thomas, they were active participants in the creation of the museum's presentation [7]. Thomas is a retired administrator, in his early seventies, who has lived in central Croydon all his life. He is an avid collector of images of old cinema buildings, many of which he remembers going to as a young (and very keen) cinemagoer. Thomas's collection is then not only of postcards, photos and slides, or even of images, but rather of his personal memories:

Q: "What is your fondest childhood memory?"

A: "Going to the cinema for the first time, to see a Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers film called 'Top Hat'. That's absolutely imprinted on my memory. I'll never forget it. It was made in 1935, so we would have seen it in 1936. I would have been about six years of age then... I thought it was wonderful... That's how my passion for cinemas began. I had always loved the cinema, ever since I was first taken. And I had a model cinema. My father bought me a thing called the Bingoscope, which was a kind of child's projector, and we had a little screen and he made some curtains for it and we used to give cinema shows and invite my friends..."

Q: "How do you spend your time these days?"

A: "Well, my cinema interest keeps me very busy. I do a lot of research and I give lots of talks for local history societies - I have to do a lot of slide preparation for that... I've got thousands of slides, mostly of old cinemas.... I also prepare a monthly newsletter for our Cinema society"

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[7] *A further, detailed case study of 'memory' collecting (where the collector, Nan, became an active participant in the creation of the museum's presentation) is examined in the concluding module of section four - 'Home Sweet Home' which centres upon the notion of the home as a private 'museum of memories'.*

As a collector of local cinema images, Thomas donated both objects and information to the *Lifetimes* museum, which influenced his perception of this particular museum:

> *"I don't normally go to museums. I've always found they were a bit stuffy, but I do like the Croydon one - because I'm in it! [Laughs]. I gave them a lot of information and slides... So a lot of 'feed' into Lifetimes came from me"*

The final 'collector category' is that of the 'knowledge' or 'information' collectors - the only 'type' of collector I had met during fieldwork that truly *enjoyed* museum visiting. Once again the explanation lies in the nature of 'knowledge' collecting. Much like object collecting, 'knowledge' collecting centres upon control and ownership, only in this case it is a control over, and ownership of information and knowledge. The 'knowledge' collectors seemed to perceive museums in their Renaissance form - mentally linking them with a *Cabinet of Curiosities* - a 'magical' place of discovery, knowledge and surprises. As such, the museum simultaneously invokes and satisfies curiosity, providing an endless 'supply' of information and 'answers', which is both the essence and the 'currency' of 'knowledge' collecting, as Ruth's story illustrates.

Ruth was born in eastern Nigeria, to English missionaries. She spent her childhood and youth at boarding schools in South England, and then went on to pursue a professional career in museums, which led her to *Lifetimes*. Ruth's recollections of her first museum experience provide a fascinating case study, especially in light of her chosen profession:

> *Q: "Do you remember your first museum visit?"*
>
> *A: "Yes I do, very vividly. It was a formative experience. I must have been very young, six or seven I think, and it was a holiday when both my parents were in England... They took me down to the local library to change our library books and while they were choosing theirs, they 'deposited' me in the local museum, which was in the back room. It was glorious! It was just a mish-mash of all the things that the local people had donated, and there was hardly any labelling. It certainly didn't make any sense to a child"*

And yet, Ruth was able to create her own meaning, through her imaginative interpretations, which she can still vividly recollect:

"What I remember most was this fabulous vitrine. It was sort of mahogany with glass, floor to ceiling, and the main part of it was filled with models, tailors' dummies, wearing shepherds' smocks. And round the feet of these things was a whole flock of Galapagos turtles. I remember imagining the Sussex downs covered in wandering flocks of turtles, just because there was no explanation of why these things should be there. It was wonderful! There were bits of Egyptian collections and a Geology collection. It was all just - 'in there' and you could make of it what you wanted"

Ruth's early museum experience also involved an encounter with the museum's curator:

> *"I found a peculiar rock on the beach when we were on holiday. I remember my parents taking me to the museum and summoning the curator and saying - 'Can you tell us something about this'? And he did. He knew all about it... And he also knew about the wonderful things in the museum display"*

This then led to various 'museum games', which Ruth invented and played on her own, as well as with her father, whenever he was home:

> *"I can remember playing games afterwards, which involved, you know, sort of preserving my teeth that fell out, and putting them on display... And my father used to join in with this when he was at home. He used to tell me mad stories about mice that escaped into a museum and things like that. So it was around in the culture, though, I think that at that time I genuinely thought museums were run by ancient men with beards, so it wasn't something I actually thought of as a career"*

Ruth's early museum visits were 'magical' experiences, filled with imagination, creativity, curiosity and knowledge; as well as an influential introduction to the notion of 'the curator' as the one who has 'all the answers' and 'all the knowledge' - which is the key to unlocking the 'magic and mystery' of the museum. These very positive, formative, early experiences and their later association with cherished childhood memories of holidays with her parents may well explain Ruth's enduring, very positive, image of museums, as well as her ultimate choice to pursue a museum career.

The final module highlights the significance of early museum experiences and their enduring effect on people's perception of museums, and practice of museum visiting.

Enduring Experiences

Past Encounters & Present Perception

The core premise underlying the following analysis is that people's present perception (and consequent practice) of museum consumption is a product of their past encounters with museums, and particularly their early experiences of museum visiting, either with a family member, or with their school. Bourdieu & Darbel's (1969) study of art museums and their consumption, establishes education and family socialisation as the most important influences on this phenomenon. Falk & Dierking's research (1992, 2000) similarly recognise the effect of education, and, especially, early family socialisation on later museum consumption practices. However, their study emphasises the differences, in terms of the experience and its impact, between a 'guided school visit' and an 'unguided family visit' (Falk & Dierking, 1992: 50), which is the essence of the following ethnographic account.

Positive Memories of Early Museum Experiences

"My own impressions about museums started filtering into my system through various senses, sight, smell, touch, at an early age... I still remember the day I found the ship models, fantastically intricate in skeletal form"

(Ripley, 1978: 11 and 140)

"Sustained personal influences, initiated and repeated by the family, can account for a lifelong interest in museum-going"

(Bettelheim, 1984, in: McManus, 1994: 84)

According to Falk & Dierking (2000) leisure behaviour is particularly influenced by early childhood experiences and parental modelling. Consequently, they argue, one of the best predictors of whether an adult will visit museums is whether they were taken to museums by their parents when they were children (2000: 74). Correspondingly, Newsom & Silver (1978) found that sixty per cent of the adult museum-visitors they surveyed attributed their interest in museums to the fact that someone in their family took them to visit a museum when they were children (Newsom & Silver, 1978, in: McManus, 1994: 84).

Indeed, nearly all of my 'museum staff' informants, who had obviously chosen to pursue a career in museums, expressed an overall positive perception of museums, and had positive memories of early museum experiences, which always involved a close family member, often a parent or grandparent, as Greg's early experiences of museum visiting illustrate. Greg is young *Clocktower* employee, who works as a gallery assistant at the *Lifetimes* museum.

Q: "Do you remember your first museum visit?"

A: "Yes. I was about five. My paternal grandfather, who we called Tad-Cu, which is Welsh for grandfather, took me. He was a schools' inspector and was very much of the opinion that if school wasn't going to do these things, than he should. So he took me round Cardiff Museum quite a few times... I thought it was a great place! Full of all the interesting things in the world"

Q: "Would you say that your early experiences of museums were positive?"

A: "Definitely".

Janet is a young museum-professional in her early thirties. Janet's memories of her early museum experiences provide a further, manifest example:

Q: "Do you remember your first museum visit?"

A: "I remember going to the Natural History Museum, I must have been five or six years old, I remember the dinosaurs in the main entrance quite clearly. The other thing I remember really, really well is the Tutankhamen Exhibition in the British Museum... I remember going all round it and they bought me a colouring book, which I kept for a very, very long time... I also remember going to the British Library. Dad took me to show me the Penny Blacks, the stamps, because I was collecting stamps"

Q: "Would you say that your early experiences of museums were positive?"

A: "Oh yes, very positive. Sometimes on Saturday morning - I don't know whether Mum and Dad had discussed it in advance but they would say - "Shall we have a day out to London?" And we would get the train from Northampton to London. And we always had sandwiches in St James's Park...

Dad knew his way around London. I remember walking, and getting on and off buses, and going to see things in museums, and having lunch in the park... So, yes, it was always very positive, it was a big treat, a family day out"

Hamish, another, young museum-professional in his early thirties, highlighted similar, positive attributes in his recollection of his childhood museum experiences:

"The first museum that I ever 'did' as a kid was actually with my parents... We had a sort of 'ritual' at the weekends. Every Saturday we'd go shopping with our parents, and we'd meet up with our friends, Ian and Keith and their parents. And then some of the parents would go off to shops, and one of the parents would take us to the museum and that was our mid-morning treat. There were no curators around on a Saturday so the museum guards would allow us to touch the dinosaur bones! And there used to be a huge beehive, made out of Perspex, attached to one of the windows. We were fascinated with the bees coming in and out... So we got used to going to museums and they weren't boring for us because we made it into our playground... And we'd always get a sticky bun [at the museum's cafeteria] - they had really <u>beautiful</u> sticky buns - the best!"

As evident from these examples, early socialisation into a museum-visiting routine, which is perceived as a 'pleasurable treat', and a 'day out' with close family members, has a lasting, positive effect on the future perception and involvement with museums. However, not all early museum experiences are this gratifying, or generate such a positive incentive for future encounters. Nevertheless, they all seem to have compelling, and at time irreversible, long-term effects.

<u>Negative Memories</u>
<u>of Early Museum Experiences</u>

"Just one unsatisfactory experience in one museum could potentially lead someone to rejecting museums in general"

(Merriman, 2000: 68)

For many of my long-term 'visitor informants' - early encounters with museums came in the form of school museum-visits, which were frequently associated with discipline, restriction, schoolwork, and boredom - as the following, typifying, accounts reveal:

> *"We were given clipboards, pencils and about three sheets of questions and you had to go round answering these questions. If you didn't answer all the questions you were in serious trouble, so you were like panicking, trying to find the answers - instead of going round enjoying it... And then you had lunch, and then on the bus and back home. I can't even remember what museum it was, all I remember is that damn clipboard and that musty smell, you know? Dark, dingy, boring, with a musty smell – that's a museum. Going round with a clipboard and that's it"*
>
> *(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

> *"They had all those stuffed animals, and birds, and things on display - I didn't like that. I thought it was creepy, all those dead things. Ooh, horrible! And you had to draw them, and answer all kinds of questions about them... I really didn't like it"*
>
> *(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

> *"You weren't allowed to touch anything - most things were in glass cases anyway, so we <u>couldn't</u> touch them. So you just walked round the museum with your clipboard and your worksheets... It was really quiet, and boring"*
>
> *(Lynn, married mother of three from Central Croydon)*

Such recollections of early school visits to museums, may account for the widespread association of museums with a school or a library - a silent, solemn place of constraints, discipline and, often boring, educational tasks. A place to see, but not touch, be seen, but not heard.

This 'austere' perception of museums is made worse by the negative experiences of 'school culture' prevalent among my informants, an alarming majority of whom, had very bleak memories of their school-days. More often than not, these harsh recollections involved being bullied, as the following examples reveal: [8]

---

[8] *As this is a particularly sensitive matter, the quoted statements have been left anonymous.*

"My worst childhood memories are linked to bullying in school. I can still feel the sting of some of the stuff that was said and done... It was horrible!"

"I was bullied all through primary school... And then I went to secondary school and again I was bullied... It got really bad... I left that school, deliberately, when I was sixteen."

"My school was an absolute hellhole! Full of drugs, full of kids who were just totally nihilistic, you know, didn't see any future for themselves at all, and did their best to sabotage it for everyone else as well. There was a lot of bullying there..."

"I didn't get physically bullied, but... for whatever reason they teased me about my lips. I've never had an issue about my lips, being a black person, black people do generally have bigger lips, but even some of the black kids teased me about it. So I got really heavily teased and bullied. It was rough."

"I was badly bullied in school because I was overweight. It was horrible... And people were less caring then about children being bullied, so you couldn't talk to anyone about it."

"I remember being given a hard time at school, and told I had 'Chinese' eyes, 'Slitty' eyes. It was a really horrible period in my life..."

"I didn't particularly like my school. I couldn't wait to leave, actually... There were a couple of rough girls in my class, you know, so I was bullied around a bit. People kept saying to me - 'These are the best days of your life' and I kept thinking - 'No they're not'. I promised myself that I would never romanticise my school days, just remember them for what they were - bad!"

Alarmingly, these kind of negative, hurtful experiences were expressed by nearly all of my informants, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Understanding the context of my informants' school-experience heightened the negative implication of associating 'Museums' with 'School', which most of them did. Furthermore, it highlighted the potential significance of an experience that is physically (and, to some extent, mentally and emotionally) removed from the everyday school setting - the school visit.

The School Visit Experience

There is an extensive body of literature, addressing a range of didactic and pedagogic issues, concerning school visits to museums, as well as life-long learning in museums (cf. Screven, 1974, 1986, 1992, 1993; Shettel, 1988; Falk & Dierking, 1992, 1997, 2000; McManus, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a, 1998; Miles, 1998; Hein, 1995a, 1998; Hein & Alexander, 1998; Ansbacher, 1998; Pitman, 1999; Moussouri, 2001 - to name but a selected few). The following analysis however, centres on the experience, memory and enduring effect of school visits to museums, rather than on their educational merit. The key argument underlining this segment is that - although museums are making a visible effort to transcend their former, formal image and become more welcoming and accessible - the *typical* school visit remains largely unchanged, and is still, first and foremost, an exercise in discipline.

Exploring local people's 'school visit' experiences integrated two areas of investigation: examining present experiences and their initial effects; and addressing past experiences and their enduring effects. The latter was achieved through interviews and informal conversations with my informants, while the former was accomplished through an extensive ethnographic study of two local primary schools. The schools were purposely selected from two contrasting localities: a relatively affluent suburb in South Croydon, which consists predominantly of middle-class families, who define themselves as being White, and (usually) of native English descent; and a far less affluent, urban area in North Croydon, which consists predominantly of lower-class families, who define themselves as being of African-Caribbean, Southeast-Asian, or native-Irish descent. Over an eighteen-month period I attended museum-related activities at both schools, accompanying the classes, as an adult-helper, on their biannual museum visits.

The ethnographic data emerging from the two areas of investigation, largely supports Falk & Dierking's (1992) finding that, visitors' recollections of museum visits with the school are based primarily (and at times solely) on the social aspects of the experience, "such as whom they sat with on the bus, and whether their parents accompanied them on the school trip" (Falk & Dierking, 1992: 51). The 'logistics' of the school's museum visit, in particular the bus, or train journey, and the 'out-of-school' meal arrangements, seemed to play an important role as well. This may be due to the social-interaction opportunities such situations provide, as well as to their novelty and distinction from the everyday school setting, as the following, enduring recollections exemplify:

"We came up to London on a double-decker bus - not on a regular coach - on a double-decker bus! This was a <u>really</u> major thing, because in those days you didn't go on school outings like they do now. It was our first museum visit, I can't remember which museum it was, but I remember sharing my packed lunch with Sara, one of the girls in my group... The most exciting thing about it was taking that double-decker bus up to London!"

(Andrea, married mother of two from North Croydon)

"I don't really remember that much about the museum... but I remember somebody being sick on the coach... And eating a 'Mars' bar [Laughs]"

(Andrew, Divorced father of three from South Croydon)

My school-age informants expressed the same kind of museum 'school visit' recollections, which often centred on the journey to the museum and back, and the out-of-school lunch, rather than on the museum itself. The following 'essays' were written by year-three pupils from the selected, North Croydon, primary school, after a visit to the *Transport Museum*:

"We saw lots of buses on the way to the museum. Then we had our lunch. Then we went back to school"

"We were the first class to go upstairs to have our lunch. We were very hungry. We like (sic) the museum. The End"

"We sat down and we ate our lunch at a table. Then we went upstairs and we saw everything. Then we went back to school"

"We were the first class to have our lunch. We ate sensibly. Jasmine forgot her lunch so Natasha shared her lunch with her"

"We was (sic) not allowed to bring cans, bottles, yoghurt or sweets. 3W [another class] was waiting for us to finish our lunch. I was as quick as I could"

The teachers and escorting adults I interviewed seemed to focus on the visits' 'logistics' (from the travel and safety arrangements to the meal arrangements) almost as much as the pupils did. This is quite predictable, considering the amount of planning, preparation and attention invested before, and during the school visit, which adds to the teacher's taxing, and often stressful, museum experience, as Dianne's recollections exemplify:

"I can <u>vividly</u> recall my first museum visit as a teacher - What a nightmare! We went to the Museum of London, which is on the Northern Line, so it involved two changes [train, then tube]. There were thirty kids in my class and I had only two parent-helpers, which is the minimum legal requirement... It was like a military operation. The 'drill' was - wait for the first approaching train and make sure all of the children in your group get on. Then, make sure all of the children in your group get off with you at the right stop, wait for the whole platform to clear and then go back into one big group with the others"

The 'logistics' of the school outing frequently overshadow the actual museum visit, diminishing it to an almost 'marginal' aspect of the day:

"We got there eventually and walked around the museum, and looked at the Roman bit of the gallery and everything. Then we all got back to the station... I think they enjoyed the visit and got a lot out of it, but as a teacher I was just completely absorbed by the practicality of getting them there and back, and making sure I didn't lose any of them, or anything like that"

A school visit to a museum customarily entails monitoring movement and behaviour, as well as limiting actions, space and time. Teachers and adult-helpers regularly find themselves engaged with disciplinary matters, be it during the visit itself, during the lunch break, or even during the journey to the museum and back:

"The worst thing about being a teacher on a school visit is that you have to have the most revolting children in your group, because you simply cannot give them to anyone else. You have to have the <u>really</u> horrible ones... Anyway, [one of the more disruptive pupils] decided to walk up and down the platform and call out at the top of his voice - 'I don't want to get on the fucking train!' - and I knew that the more fuss I made the more he would kick up, and actually the best thing to do would be to ignore him. I remember looking at the station clock and thinking - 'It's two minutes to the next train - Please make that a 'quick' two minutes! Please come, please come'. Eventually the train came and we all got in, and then he decided he doesn't want to sit down, he wants to stand up. And every time I told him to sit down - he sat down and stood up again straight away... It was a nightmare, a real nightmare"

These kinds of experiences may account for the overall lack of enthusiasm, prevalent among many of the teachers I interviewed, to frequently engage in this taxing activity. A recent survey, conducted at *Reading Museum*, similarly indicates that, while teachers are convinced of the importance and merit of learning from objects, the majority of them prefer loans to museum visits. Nearly all of the surveyed teachers felt constrained by the cost and stress of organising and supervising a museum visit, as well as by the pressure to 'guarantee' the children's behaviour in the museum (McAlpine, 2002: 26-27).

The intensity of these 'museum-visit pressures' and anxiety varies between different museums and different schools, as well as between different classes within the same school. While the museum's atmosphere and educational activities provide a framework for the school visit, it is often the groups' character and temperament that sets the 'tone' of the experience, as the *Horniman Museum* case study illustrates.

The Horniman Museum Experience

The *Horniman Museum* is situated on the South Circular road, near Forest Hill station. The museum incorporates an eclectic array of exhibitions - from Frederick Horniman's nineteenth century *Natural History* and *Anthropology* collections (displaying flora and fauna specimens, as well as artefacts, ornaments, tools and costumes); to his extensive *Music* collection (displaying 6,000 musical instruments from around the world); and the more recent additions of a - *Living Waters Aquarium*; *Animal Corner*; *Conservatory*; and the *CUE* (*Centre for Understanding the Environment*). These enable the museum to offer a broad educational service, catering for different age groups, as well as a variety of national curriculum subjects, at different key-stages.

I visited the *Horniman Museum* as a participant adult-helper, on two separate occasions, escorting two, very different school groups, from the two, distinct Croydon localities. Both groups had similar preparation activities prior to the visit, which included looking at photos of the museum's exhibition galleries, and talking about what they will be doing and looking at, during their visit. Upon arrival, the pupils in both groups were given a 'welcome pack' containing a map of the museum, a pencil and clipboard, as well as several worksheets to guide and structure their tour through the different galleries. Both groups had the same handling session, with the same education officer. And yet, the 'tone' and overall experience of the two visits could not have been more different.

The first school group I joined numbered twenty-four pupils and six escorting adults (including the teacher and myself), which meant that each adult had only four children under their care during the visit. Moreover, the class was the only school group present at the museum that morning, so there were fewer limitations on the children's time and movement in the galleries. The mood was therefore very calm and stress-free, with each pupil receiving virtually undivided attention from either a member of staff, or the group's escorting adult.

The second school group I joined integrated three year-three classes, with an average of forty pupils per class, and six adult-helpers per class (including the teacher and myself). Each escorting adult was therefore in charge of seven pupils. All three classes had to go through the same galleries, and use the same designated spaces for the handling session and for the lunch-break, which meant keeping a very rigorous timetable and practically rushing the children through the museum. This not only created a stressful atmosphere, but also caused a fair amount of anxiety for some of the pupils who did not manage to complete their museum worksheets.

Having several disruptive pupils in each group made the experience especially draining. Even the short bus journey from the school to the museum was taxing - with teachers and adult-helpers (myself included) constantly breaking up fights, quieting pupils down and ensuring they were safely seated. The actual museum visit was far worse - from the moment we entered the museum and throughout the day, the only sentences voiced by the escorting adults were - *'Be quiet'*; *'Move on'*; *'Stay with your group'*; *'Don't touch'*; *'Don't run'*; and *'Don't shout'*. Then, during lunch - *'Stop throwing food'*; *'Don't eat her crisps'*; *'Stop kicking him'*; and *'Stop pulling her hair'*; were added to the 'repertoire'. And so it went on. The only time the children were truly attentive was during the small-group's handling session - where they were sitting down quietly, looking, listening, touching, drawing, thinking and asking, or answering, questions.

Visiting the *Horniman Museum* that time round was, for the most part, a very stressful and draining experience - for everyone involved. These participant-observation sessions enabled me to empathise with my informants and appreciate *why* so many of them dreaded (and at times avoided) school outings, and in particular museum visits. Nevertheless, many of the teachers (and most of the parents) I interviewed, advocated the educational importance of such outings, as Dianne's final remarks exemplify:

Q: "Do you think museums are worth visiting with school groups?"

A: "Definitely"

Q: "Despite all the stress and anxiety?"

A: "Definitely. Because these are such different environments - they offer very unique learning opportunities. Being in the classroom can become mundane. So in order to keep the pace of learning going, to keep the kids 'with you' - you need that 'extra bit' of variety, you need to take them out of the classroom. It really doesn't matter whether you go to the supermarket, or the fire station, or the opticians, or the museum, or a farm, or whatever - all visits are invaluable in lots of different ways, because you're taking them into a very different environment. So, yes, I think museums are definitely worth visiting with school groups, despite the financial implications, and the organisational problems, and all the hassle involved..."

The school's preparation and follow-up activities play an important role in turning a school outing, and especially a museum visit, into a meaningful, memorable experience. The museum's level of involvement with these activities, alongside its level of control over the visit (and the visitors) can have a dramatic effect on a 'school visit' experience, as the *Preston Manor* case study demonstrates.

The Preston Manor Museum Experience

Preston Manor is a conventional manor house, providing an unconventional museum education service. Situated two miles north of Brighton, the *Preston Manor* museum offers a "unique opportunity to see an Edwardian home both 'upstairs' and 'downstairs'" (*Preston Manor - Visitors' Guide* Pamphlet, 1998).

The manor house was originally built in 1250 and then rebuilt in 1783. It was added to substantially in 1905, when Lady Ellen Thomas-Stanford, the last owner of the house, moved into the manor with her second husband, Sir Charles Thomas-Stanford, who was later elected Mayor of Brighton. After the deaths of Sir Charles and Lady Ellen Thomas-Stanford, in 1932, the manor house and contents were left to Brighton Borough Council, at their request. The house first opened to the public in 1933 (ibid.).

These days, *Preston Manor* provides the setting for a Victorian servants' role play called - *'Situation Vacant'* - in which the visiting pupils participate in a 'mass interview' for four vacant posts on the staff of the Stanford household. The aim of the experience is to "encourage children to learn about Victorian domestic service and to feel empathy with the past by providing as authentic an experience as possible... A visit to *Preston Manor* allows pupils to work with artefacts from the handling collection in an authentic setting" (*Preston Manor - A Guide For Teachers* Pamphlet, 1998). This corresponds to both, the key element of 'historical enquiry' in the national curriculum for history (which highlights the importance of acquiring evidence from historical sources and learning from first-hand experience) and the prevalent, contemporary, emphasis on "recreating the past through being able to see and even use the objects and artefacts of the past" (Goodacre & Baldwin, 2002: 21).

I visited *Preston Manor* as a participant adult-helper, escorting a year-five class from the selected, South Croydon, primary school. The group numbered twenty-six pupils and seven escorting adults (including the teacher and myself). As with the other, participant-observation, school visit sessions (to the *Transport Museum* and the *Horniman Museum*, as well as to *Lifetimes*) emphasis was placed upon the preparations *prior* to the visit; the reactions and interactions *during* the visit; and the overall impression and internalisation of the experience, *after* the visit.

The Preparations

Being aware of the unconventional museum experience they provide, the education team at *Preston Manor* make every effort to prepare their future visitors, children and adults alike. Several weeks prior to the visit an extensive information pack is sent out to the school, including: a map of the area, showing the house and grounds; a brief historical account of the manor house and its owners; a detailed plan of the house; and a diagram showing the 'Edwardian household hierarchy' of *Preston Manor*, at the turn of the century; An outline of servants' duties in Victorian times, a well as other background materials are also included. Great care is taken in explaining the concept of role play, as well as the practicalities of its practice, thereby ensuring that both the pupils and the accompanying adults know what to except and what will be expected of them:

> *"Role play is basically pretending, which is why it can be particularly effective with children who haven't yet become as inhibited as adults...*

The Preston Manor role play is historical, based on the daily routine of men and women in service at the turn of the century. It aims to create an atmosphere in which pupils can find out about servants' work and carry out some of their tasks, using authentic object, by putting themselves in the position of young people in Victorian times. It is essential that children realise that they will be taking a trip back in time, but also that they will have to have a willing suspension of disbelief and ignore the cash desk and the fire extinguishers, not to mention the uniformed staff and visitors"

(Preston Manor - A Guide For Teachers Pamphlet, 1998)

Specific guidelines (alongside a list of references and resources) are also provided by the education team, in order to help the teacher prepare the pupils for role play experience:

"Build up a profile of the character that the pupil will be assuming during the role play... What sort of family did this person have? What sort of home did the family live in? How many rooms were there? How was it furnished? How was it heated and lit? Was there a bathroom? There are quite a few photographs available of what working-class Victorian homes looked like, which can help resource this... What does the character look like? What sort of clothes did they wear? What clothes would be worn in domestic service? Photographs, again are a good source for this... Why does the person need a job?"

(Preston Manor - A Guide For Teachers Pamphlet, 1998)

The class is then sent a formal *'Situations Vacant'* note from Sir and Lady Thomas-Stanford, inviting applications for the four vacant positions of: *Footman*, *Oddman*, *Housemaid*, and *Kitchen Maid*. The children are then asked to write their character's application letter, and prepare a suitable 'Victorian' costume to wear on the day of the visit, as well as a suitable 'Victorian' lunch (a piece of bread and some cheese), which they are asked to bring with them instead of their 'twentieth-century lunch-box food':

"It helps the children to get into role and maintain their part if they wear suitable costume. This need not be elaborate. Boys can wear trousers tucked into long socks, waistcoats, shirts, caps and neckerchief. Girls can wear skirts or dresses and shawls"

(Preston Manor - Information For Schools Pamphlet, 1998)

The *Preston Manor* visit is customarily planned as a concluding 'climax' to studying the Victorian period. Indeed, this unusually active and creative preparation process generated a keen sense of anticipation for this 'time travel' experience, among children and adults alike.

The Visit

The role play experience began as soon as the school group left the car park. The pupils - dressed as Victorian servants - were welcomed by the Head Housemaid, 'Miss Rose' (a member of the education team, dressed in appropriate period costume). After a short, in-role introduction, the 'candidates' were taken - through the servants' entrance - into the house, and shown into the grand entrance hall. Here they were introduced to 'Mrs. Storey', the Housekeeper, who conducted the group interview [see Figure 3.1]. She began by outlining the duties of the 'advertised' vacant posts the 'candidates' had 'applied' for, proceeding to explain the 'evaluation' process that was about to take place. The group interview concluded with a glaring reminder - *"You will do as you are told. You will speak only when spoken to"*. The Housekeeper's austere appearance and conduct, along with her impassive tone of voice, produced an extremely believable performance, which situated the role play experience in a 'proper' Victorian atmosphere.

Figure 3.1: Preston Manor School Visit (Entrance Hall: 'Candidates' Interview')

The 'candidates' were then led around the manor house, from one room to another, learning about the duties a servant would perform in each of the rooms they entered. Some of these duties were then explained in detail and demonstrated by the escorting servant. The 'candidates' were then asked to perform the task themselves - from setting the dining room table correctly for a five course meal, to cleaning the drawing room carpet with old tea-leaves; from making the beds, to rolling 'fire lighters' for the bedroom's fireplace [see Figure 3.2]. The 'candidates' were then taken to the basement, where they learned how to do the washing [see Figure 3.3]. From there the group was led into the servants' hall, where they learned to perform a variety of tasks, including: pinning out lace, polishing the silver, and black-leading the range [see Figure 3.4]. The final 'assignment area' was the kitchen [see Figure 3.5]. Here the 'candidates' were taught how to make lemonade, gingerbread and marmalade, as well as churn milk into butter [see Figures 3.6a, 3.6b, and 3.6c]. The children were completely absorbed by the role-play. They were eager to learn to perform the various tasks as best they could and their conduct was impeccable - they did exactly what they were told to do, when they were told to do it, and did not speak unless spoken to. Being surrounded by authentic period artefacts, within a fully furnished Edwardian manor house, while encountering very realistic, in-role characters (in period costume), and being expected to perform very realistic tasks, made the role play experience entirely believable and compelling.

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 3.2: Preston Manor School Visit (Upstairs Bedroom: Rolling 'Fire Lighters')

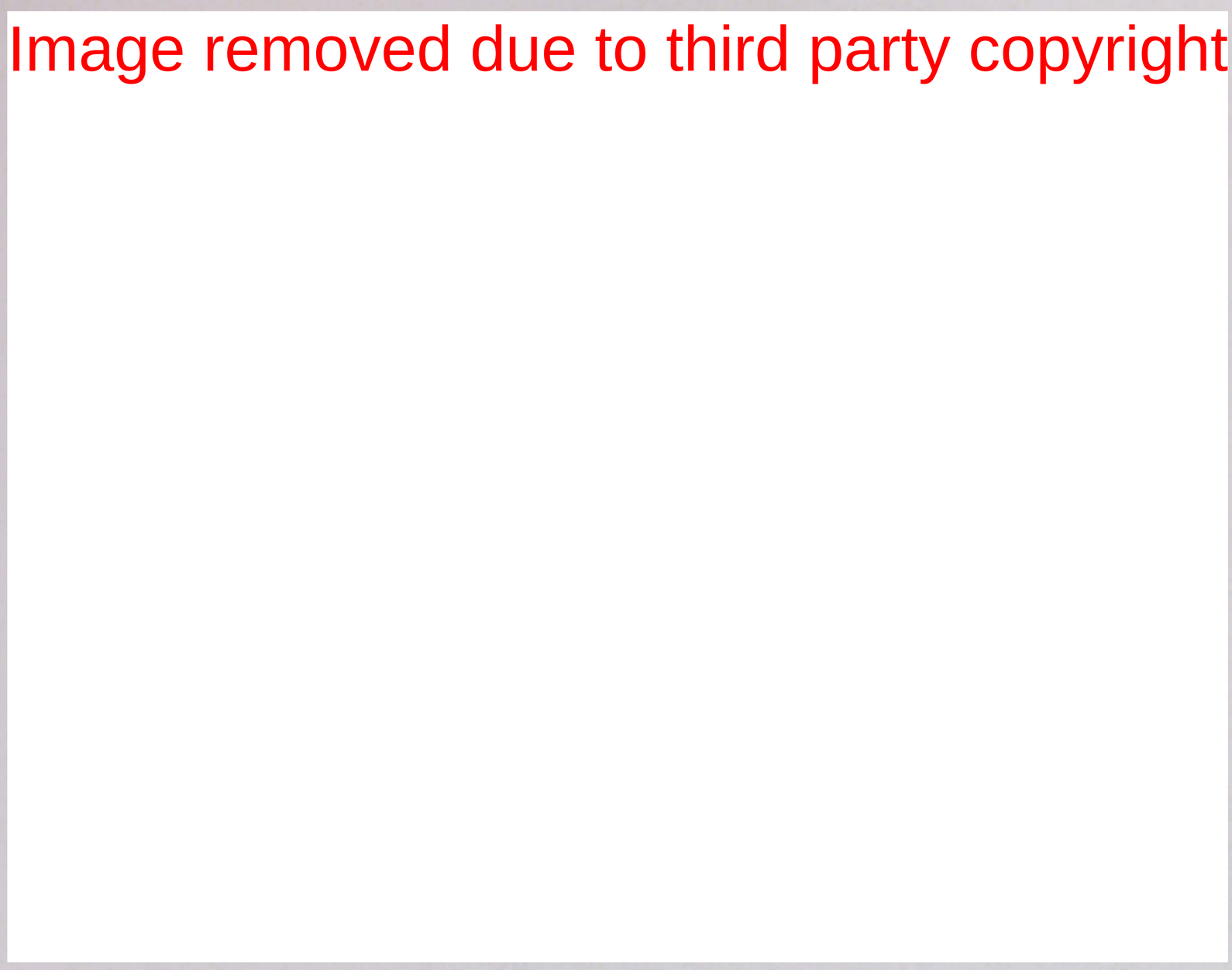

Figure 3.3: Preston Manor School Visit (Downstairs Basement: Doing The Washing)

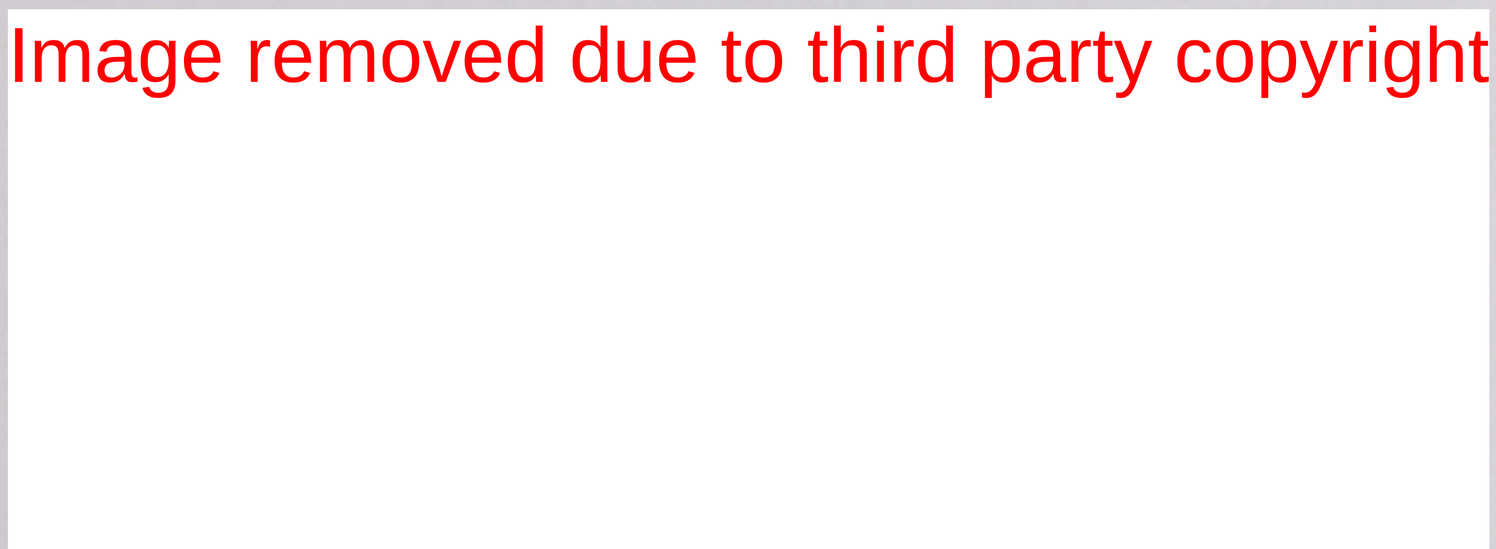

Figure 3.4: Preston Manor School Visit (Servants' Hall: Black-Leading The Range)

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Figure 3.5: Preston Manor School Visit (Kitchen Area: 'Waste Not, Want Not')

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 3.6a: Preston Manor School Visit (Kitchen Chores: Instructions)

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Figure 3.6b: Preston Manor School Visit (Kitchen Chores: Making Gingerbread)

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 3.6c: Preston Manor School Visit (Kitchen Chores: Churning The Milk)

The tour concluded back in the main entrance hall, where 'Mrs. Storey' selected the 'successful candidates', who were then asked to come back the following morning to 'start their employment'. The role-playing session was then broken, to allow for an open, out-of-character discussion with the participating museum education team-members. The pupils were encouraged to ask questions, make observations, and generally express their thoughts and feelings. The opportunity to articulate and discuss the experience was particularly essential - in light of the role-play's intensity.

The Preston Manor museum visit was an exceptionally positive and memorable experience (for both the pupils and the escorting adults), not only because of its exceptionally interactive, participant nature, which combines play with 'hands on' learning, but also because of the creative follow-up activities that the class engaged in that term.

The Follow-Up Activities

The pupils' follow-up activities focused on creative writing. The children had a choice between writing a descriptive essay about the staff members they met, and the work their characters did at *Preston Manor*; or writing a more imaginative, in-role essay, about the life and daily routines of an imaginary servant-character at the manor house [see figure 3.7a].

In addition to their creative writing assignments, the class had a joint project of creating, producing and performing a short play (about life as a young Victorian Servant) for the school's end-of-year assembly [see figures 3.7b and 3.7c]. This meant working together on a variety of creative tasks, such as: writing the story, casting the roles, rehearsing the performance, preparing the period costumes, painting the scenery, decorating the stage, and so on.

Producing a play and writing in-role essays - in the first person, focuses the experience (and its later recollections) on the context of the museum-visit itself, rather than on the social aspects that comprise the 'day-out' event. Thus, generating a museum memory, (not just a 'school outing' memory) and a very positive one at that, as the following statements exemplify:

"It was so much fun! It was like we <u>really</u> travelled back in time. Mrs Storey [the Housekeeper] was <u>so</u> strict! And there was like (sic) <u>so</u> much work... and so many rules... I'm really glad I'm not a Victorian servant [Chuckles]"

(Michelle, participant primary school pupil)

"It was such a unique experience. It gave them [the pupils] a wonderful opportunity to <u>feel</u> what it was like to go into service in Victorian times..."

(Jessica, participant primary school teacher)

"It was excellent! It was <u>very</u> 'hands on' and the staff were really good... The children had so much fun that day, and they learned so much from it"

(Erika, participant adult-helper)

"It was really, really good. The staff did a great job making it seem so real. And the children just loved it! They still talk about it... [six months later]"

(Eleanor, participant adult-helper)

"Using First Person Interpretation allows you to interact with the group as if they had really travelled back in time... This kind of 'hands on' role-play completely shatters the idea of a 'do not touch, time capsule, country house'. It is such a different experience from the traditional museum visit with the tedious guided tours and the boring worksheets..."

(Hamish, Lifetimes' museum exhibition officer, who played the role of the Butler, 'Mr Elphick', at Preston Manor, between 1987 and 1990)

Unlike many other 'living history' experiences that employ 'first person interpretation', the *Preston Manor* role-play experience involves exceptionally active <u>participation</u>, which is firmly grounded in classroom preparation, and follow-up activities. Moreover, while the *Preston Manor* role-play certainly creates a 'time travel' sensation, it does not present an idealised - 'rose-tinted picture of the past' (see section one). Instead, it offers a, relatively realistic, 'glimpse' into the austere experience of being a Victorian servant.

It is experiences such as these that have the most profound and enduring effect on participants' perception and consequent consumption of museums in later life.

Figure 3.7a: Life As A Servant – 'In-Role' Essay Segment

(Following the Preston Manor Visit)

Image removed due to third party copyright

Figure 3.7b: School Play – Dress Rehearsal (Following the Preston Manor Visit)

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Figure 3.7c: School Play – The Performance (Following the Preston Manor Visit)

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this section has been to broaden the discussion, beyond the specific case study of *Lifetimes,* to include local people's perception, consumption and overall experience of museums *in general*, which affects their perception, consumption and overall experience of local history museums in particular. The section therefore incorporated a multifaceted analysis of contemporary museum culture, examining the role museums play within current education, recreation and consumption practices.

The first module explored people's leisure activity preferences, as individuals and as family members (with regard to age, family status and general socio-economic status), while highlighting the unique 'transitional' characteristics that distinguish museum visiting from other leisure-time activities. Locating it *between* recreation and education, *between* 'choice' and 'chore', museum consumption is viewed as neither leisure *per se*, nor labour *per se*. The critique proceeded to address the structural and cultural *deterrents*, as well as the structural and cultural *incentives* to museum consumption, emphasising the strong sense of parental 'obligation' towards museum visiting, with and *for* children. The analysis then demonstrated how the perception of museum visiting, as a cultured, worthwhile activity that is beneficial for children's education, cultivation and socialisation, provides the core motivation for most parents, as well as for many teachers to visit museums, outweighing the various structural and cultural deterrents they may experience.

The second module examined this premise further, establishing the unequivocal effect museum perception has on museum consumption. The review highlighted the need for expanding the traditional, rudimentary dyad of 'visitors' and 'non-visitors' to include a new, distinctive category, defined as 'gallery goers'.

The discussion continued with a comparison between shopping and museum visiting, which highlighted the significance of *choice*, *tactility* and *potential ownership*, thereby emphasising the importance of museum-shops and souvenirs to the museum experience. The review then proceeded to consider the value and meaning of objects in general and collections in particular, leading to an in-depth exploration of different types of collectors and their distinctly different attitudes towards museums and museum consumption.

The third, and final module examined the hypothesis that people's present perception (and consequent consumption) of museums is a product of their past encounters with museums, and particularly their early experiences of museum visiting, either with a family member, or with the school. The module concluded with an ethnographic exploration of the 'school visit' experience, which integrated two areas of investigation: First, examining present experiences and their initial effects (with an emphasis upon the preparations *prior* to the museum visit; the reactions and interactions *during* the visit; and the overall impression and internalisation of the experience, *after* the museum visit, by it various participants); And, second, addressing past experiences and their enduring effects. These ethnographic data jointly illustrated that the *quality* of early museum experiences, along with the *quality* of their social contexts, has a profound and enduring effect on the perception and consequent consumption of museums in later life, be it as a gratifying 'leisure choice', or an edifying 'cultural chore', or any other, 'transitional' category in between.

While people's overall experience of museums in general has an underlying effect on their experience of local history museums in particular, there are other, distinct factors that influence the consumption of a local history museum, such as the perception of, and attitude towards history, locality and community, which must be equally acknowledged. The following thesis section analyses these factors and their critical significance to the *Lifetimes* case study.

Section Four

Past, Place & People

Introduction

"Museums have a key task to play in providing an understanding of identity and a sense of belonging to a place or community... [They] can provide a valuable sense of connection with the past and present, and serve as a springboard for the future"

(Ambrose & Paine, 1993: 3)

A local history museum is more than just a presentation of localised historical materials. It is a figurative meeting point of 'past', 'place' and 'people', which has the potential to generate an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts, and profoundly related to a sense of identity and belonging. The principal modules of the following section therefore explore local people's experience of history, locality and community.

The first core-module examines people's perception of 'history', 'heritage' and 'the past', and the ways in which they choose to access, explore, absorb and appropriate these mediums. The critique also addresses notions of 'longing' and 'nostalgia', investigating the prevalent trend to highlight particular historical events, and life events, over others.

The second core-module explores people's perception and practice of 'place', studying their means of creating and maintaining a sense of locality, community and belonging. The review centres upon a detailed examination of Croydon's distinctive complexities of 'place' and 'space', in conjunction with its apparent 'identity crisis'. The discussion highlights the local manifestations of the 'Croydon experience' from its residents' diverse points of view.

The third, and final, core-module draws attention to the materiality of 'past' and 'place' - as an external reference point for identity, as well as to the notion of the home as the most local, and most personal of history museums - as a private 'museum of memories'. The analysis centres upon a detailed case study of 'longing' and 'memory collecting', where the collector, Nan, became an active participant in *Lifetimes'* presentation. Establishing the corresponding roles of material culture and oral narratives in personal reminiscences, the analysis demonstrates their significance in the practice of history and remembrance, within a specific, domestic context.

Yearning For Yesterday [1]

"History has always been a hybrid form of knowledge, syncretizing past and present, memory and myth, the written record and the spoken word"

(Samuel, 1996: 443)

Our perception of the past (especially in its broader - national and international - sense) is influenced by a fusion of facts and folklore, images, memories and mythologies. These jointly constitute our conception of history, heritage and nostalgia, which, in turn, play an important role in creating our sense of - 'past', 'place' and 'people' - our interrelated notions of continuity, locality, community, identity and belonging.

The immense significance of the past in western culture is perhaps best manifested by the on-going debate on its presentation (cf. Horne, 1984; Wright, 1985; Hewison, 1987; Blatti, 1987; Lowenthal, 1985, 1998; Lumley, 1988; Shaw & Chase, 1989; Urry, 1990, 1995; Fowler, 1992; Walsh, 1992; Shanks & Tilley, 1992; Bender 1992, 1993, 1998; Huyseen, 1995; Forty & Kuchler, 1999 - to name but a few of the numerous examples). Throughout the ages, a variety of textual and visual presentations narrated and depicted the national past (see Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988; Kuchler & Melion, 1991; Gombrich, 1984, 1994, 1995; and Haskell, 1995) empowering those who created them by enabling their exclusive control over the period's 'epistemological knowledge system' (cf. Foucault 1970, 1972; Sheridan, 1980). Frequently class and gender biased, historical presentations typically highlighted the dominant male figures of the ruling class. As such, history has provided (and still provides) a powerful means for establishing and maintaining socio-political claims, thereby affirming social structures and relations. History museums, by the same token, can serve as a socio-political 'staging ground', setting an agenda within which a specific historical narrative is created and displayed. Through the practice of classification, interpretation and presentation, a 'knowledge' of the past, alongside an 'evaluation' of the present and the future, are produced, promoted and proclaimed (see Bowler, 1989; Hooper-Greenhill, 1989, 1992; and Bennett, 1995).

The *Lifetimes* museum was created out of a mixture of different, and at times conflicting agendas, politics and philosophies, which were endorsed by the museum's principal 'visionary' groups, namely: Croydon's local interest societies, Croydon Museum Service, and the Croydon Council (see sections one and two).

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[1] *A variation on a theme from Fred Davis' - **"Yearning For Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia"** (1979).*

The local societies' objective has always been to establish a traditional, authoritative, place-oriented museum, with an early-history emphasis. Conversely, the museum professionals' aspiration was to create an innovative, people-oriented museum, which centred upon 'living-memory' displays and promoted the principles of pluralism, liberalism, and an overall 'Constructivist' museum-education model (see section two). The council's core objectives were (and largely still are) to portray Croydon as <u>one</u> integrated, worthy and promising municipality that could (and in their eyes should) be regarded as a city in its own right.

Notwithstanding these pronounced differences, the three core, 'visionary' groups share a fundamental common objective - to highlight Croydon's historical importance and enhance its overall image. Indeed, nearly all of the surveyed visitors to *Lifetimes*, and many of my long-term 'visitor-informants' professed to having very limited knowledge of Croydon's history, and often limited interest in it as well. The majority of them seemed to perceive Croydon as nothing more than an ordinary, modern, urban complex, with little, if any historical significance:

"I don't know much about Croydon's history, not at all really. I mean, to me Croydon is just Croydon, you know?"

(Kristen, single mother from North Croydon)

"I'm ashamed to admit a certain disinterest... Croydon has had a dreadful reputation in the past of being a commercial centre, nothing but traffic, office blocks, commerce, not somewhere you would think of as having - 'History' - nothing major anyway"

(Rebecca, married mother of two from South Croydon)

"I don't know an awful lot about Croydon's past... I've always thought of Croydon as just another modern town, so it never really crossed my mind that it would have a history"

(Lynn, married mother of three from Central Croydon)

In order to understand the origin of, and reasoning behind these prevalent attitudes, we must examine people's perception of 'history', 'heritage' and 'the past' in general, as well as their perception of, and attachment to Croydon's *past*, *place* and *people* in particular, which is the essence of the following two core-modules.

Pursuing The Past

Perception & Practice

Following Merriman's study (1989b, 1991, 2000) specific questions regarding history, heritage and 'the past' were incorporated into the interview format that was used with both the survey of visitors to *Lifetimes* (see Appendix 1) and the long-term informants' interviews (see Appendix 3). The overall findings endorse Merriman's core arguments, that most people attach *some* value to knowing about the past, and show some degree of interest in actively doing so. An overwhelming majority of the people I interviewed or spoke with casually (99% of adults and 100% of children) stated that it is important to learn from, and about the past, as it influences both the present and, to a lesser degree, the future:

> *"You need to study the past in order to understand the present and the future. I really believe that you can't go forward unless you look back"*
>
> *(Leon, Clocktower employee from North Croydon)*

> *"The way things are now, and how life is now is very much based on the past, on the discoveries and the inventions, and people's life experiences... You have to have some kind of understanding of how we've got to where we are today, and obviously that has an impact on how things will be in the future"*
>
> *(Janet, museum-staff member from South Croydon)*

> *"I think it's vital to know about history in a democracy, it is one of the most important freedoms we have. You cannot understand the present without knowing about the past"*
>
> *(Stewart, book collector from Central Croydon)*

> *"I always use this quote from George Orwell's '1984' - "Those who control the past control the present. Those who control the present control the future". If you don't know how we got where we are now, you can't know what the possibilities are for the future. I think it's fundamental to a democratic society that people have a shared understanding of the past"*
>
> *(Rachel Hasted, Lifetimes' principal museum officer)*

There was a manifest variation in the forms and levels of history that my informants were interested in (be it personal, familial, communal, local, national or international), as well as in the ways they choose to access, explore, absorb and appropriate the past. These included a wide range of means, from reading biographies and historical novels, to watching films and television programmes with a historical interest or theme; from visiting history museums, archaeological sites, historic houses and other heritage sites, to attending folklore festivals and heritage re-enactment events; from collecting antiques, to researching the family tree; from attending lectures and guided walks with a historical theme, to participating in an archaeological dig, or joining a historical society. The forms and levels of interest and active involvement varied in accordance with my informants' age, gender, ethnicity, education, occupation and socio-economic status. Better-educated, more-affluent individuals, over the age of thirty, often demonstrated a broader interest in history, on a number of levels, ranging from the personal and familial, to the communal and local, to the national and, occasionally, the international, as demonstrated by the following interview extracts:

"It is very important for me to know about the past, especially as a black person, but it isn't just a black thing, we should <u>all</u> know about each other's history, because we live in a world where we're increasingly encountering other people, so it's important that we know about each other"

(Desmond, Clocktower employee from North Croydon)

"We were brought up with very much a British centred point of view, so you tend to forget that the rest of the world doesn't see history in the same way. Each time I meet somebody from another part of the world I realise that they have a different story to tell and they see the same events in a completely different way. So I think world history is extremely important"

(Angela, museum professional from Central Croydon)

"For a large part of the preceding century British history <u>was</u> world history, so to look at British history without its ramification would be difficult. So, I would say I am more interested in <u>world</u> history, because if you are only looking at British history you are only getting a narrow view of the past"

(Richard, retired psychiatric nurse from Central Croydon)

"I prefer the two ends of the spectrum. It has been very important for me personally to think about my family history, to locate myself in that story... I remember talking to my parents about their experience and where their families came from, and looking at the family photo album and all that... Local history I think has been problematic for me because I don't have a locality that I feel particularly involved with... British history carries a lot of difficult overtones about Empire and Colonialism, but I <u>am</u> interested in seeing how that British history slots into a bigger, global picture. So I prefer the two ends of the spectrum - family history and world history"

(Ruth, museum professional from South Croydon)

Again, these findings coincide with Merriman's study (1989b, 1991, 2000) which concluded that there is a considerable gulf between the 'heritage-keen culture vultures', who demonstrate a broad interest in the past, on various levels, and undertake a wide range of activities; and the 'non-participants', who do not engaged with conventional history and heritage related pursuits. "Crucially, it is discovered that the main way the latter group prefers to experience the past is at home, and that the most important sense of past for them is personal and local" (Merriman, 2000: 5). Merriman further observes a distinction between two fields of perception in our experience of the past, the first - "common to all, is the personal sense of the past, which relies on memory and attachment to places and things. The second, which is dominated by the educated and the affluent, is... that which has no direct connection with one's personal past, being expressed in terms of the history of other people, of the region, of the nation, of the world. With the discovery that those who do not visit museums find the personal sense of the past most appealing, a further dilemma then arises for the museum worker attempting to break open the museum beyond its narrow confines" (ibid.)

Another, revealing aspect of people's perception of the past is their definition of a historical event. When asked if they had lived through any historical events, most of my informants referred to national or international events, rather than local or familial ones. Their responses often highlighted international conflicts and wars, alongside various Royal events (such as coronations, weddings and funerals). World War II was, without a doubt, the most salient, powerful example of an historical event in my informants' minds. *Every one* of my interviewees began their 'historical events account' by stating whether or not they were old enough to have personally experienced (and recall) 'the war':

"Well, I'm too young to remember the war, but..."

(Rebecca, married mother of two from South Croydon)

"Given my age group you will know that the years from 1939 to 1945 were given over to the war, and that has had its influence... My sister and I were evacuated away from home to Nottinghamshire... We were very homesick and the homesickness went on for a very long while. It was very different from our home and the life we were used to... And of course we were known as 'the evacuees', and the village kids were not terribly welcoming"

(Richard, retired psychiatric nurse from Central Croydon)

"I think for anybody who lived through the Second World War, everything after it seems a bit tame in a way. I was seven at the beginning of the War. And I've got quite vivid memories of the Croydon Airport raid in 1940 and the Blitz generally, you know, going up to the top of South Norwood Hill and looking at the fires... That is one of the most vivid memories I have, that, and the evacuation of course"

(John, retired railway administrator from Central Croydon)

Another prominent world-history event, that was frequently mentioned, was NASA's 1969 moon landing:

"I remember the landing on the moon. I was in infant school... It was <u>such</u> a big thing - Man landing on the moon for the first time! I remember we were allowed to watch it on TV"

(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)

"Neil Armstrong landing on the moon! Live TV coverage, in black & white, July 21st 1969. I can remember being put in front of the TV, I was only three, but I do remember that black & white broadcast, and the broadcaster saying - 'The Americans have landed on the moon' - it was so amazing!"

(Hamish, Lifetimes' museum exhibition officer)

"Man on the moon! I was really influenced by it. I'm really into space-men toys and things, and when I look back it's because of the space race... it was something that was really hyped up, nowadays it isn't, but it was then"

(Dorothy, avid toy collector from North Croydon)

Prominent national-history events, associated with the Royal family were regularly mentioned as well:

> *"I remember sitting on the kerb, waiting for the Queen to drive past... It was 1953, Queen Elizabeth's Coronation, so I would have been about three years old. I remember literally sitting there, on the kerb, with my family, waiting for the Queen... I think that is probably my earliest memory"*
>
> *(Stewart, book collector from Central Croydon)*

> *"I remember Princess Anne's wedding. It was the first Royal Wedding and it was such a big thing! I remember watching it on the television at home... And then, obviously, Princess Diana's wedding, and then her funeral"*
>
> *(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

> *"Diana's death seems quite 'historical' as well, the way that everybody got sort of emotional about it... I never really liked her, but when she died I was really sad. It was very strange - the way that everybody just 'went' with it, I mean, it was like you <u>had</u> to join in, you know? It was really weird"*
>
> *(Dorothy, avid toy collector from North Croydon)*

> *"I remember Charlie's wedding, Prince Charles that is, we watched it on the telly, at home..."*
>
> *(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

There seemed to be a prevalent drive to highlight particular historical events, such as great wars, great achievements, or great discoveries, along with important Royal events and particular life events, such weddings and funerals, as well as other, ceremonial events, like Coronations, or Graduations, respectively. This may well be due to the dramatic nature of such events and their extraordinariness, which makes them stand out as 'threshold events', as a kind of personal, communal, or national - 'rites-of-passage'. The interest in Royal births, weddings, funerals, and other ceremonial events such as coronations, emerged as almost distinct from other historical events, as it was frequently linked to a more personal sense of the past, and to a notion of national 'heritage', rather than national 'history' *per se*. This then highlighted the importance of exploring how (and whether) my informants distinguish between these two, closely related, mediums.

History & Heritage

"What exactly constitutes heritage, and also therefore what studies of heritage address themselves to, is notoriously difficult to define... Samuel, for example, refuses to acknowledge any contrast between heritage and history, arguing instead that they are points on the same continuum"

(Merriman, 1996: 381)

Although 'history' and 'heritage' both provide fundamental means of accessing and interpreting the past, which then generate particular 'readings' of the past in the present, the two mediums differ on their levels of ascribed authority, as well as on their proximity to a personal sense, use and understanding of the past. While most of my informants granted a more authoritative status to history, heritage was commonly viewed as more personal, more tangible, more contemporary, and therefore altogether more accessible:

> *"History is an almost abstract concept, heritage is more of a concrete thing. It's the landscape, the buildings, the ceremonies... all those "leftovers" from the past... It's the actual things you can see and study in the present"*
>
> *(Greg, Clocktower employee from Central Croydon)*

> *"History is something ancient, remote, something that's happened a long time ago. Heritage is something that belongs to us, that we have a claim to - here and now"*
>
> *(Rebecca, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

> *"Heritage is more personal than history because it belongs to us. I mean, history is something that just is - it exists, whereas heritage is something we're trying to claim, to hold on to, it's <u>our</u> past"*
>
> *(Sam, Clocktower employee from North Croydon)*

> *"Heritage is what we've inherited from the past. History <u>is</u> the past..."*
>
> *(Thomas, photograph collector from Central Croydon)*

For some informants history and, especially, heritage entailed a negative connotation, which often echoed the mainstream academic critique on modern heritage presentations (see sections one and two):

"History is relatively objective, whereas heritage is completely subjective... It's selective and it's a lie, a falsification... I'm always wary of heritage presentations, or 'experiences' - it always comes as a perversion of history"

(Stewart, book collector from Central Croydon)

"History I'm afraid to say, sounds terribly dull to me, and heritage is just the 'commercial arm' of that history. It has a kind of tacky connotation, like a 'mock-up' of something, a - 'Ye Old English Tea Shop' - type of connotation"

(Dianne, primary school teacher from South Croydon)

Other informants voiced a more balanced view:

"Our history teacher used to say to us - don't take one thing you read as the gospel, always bear in mind that history is - 'his story', so look at who the writer is, where he came from, where and when he was writing 'his story'. So I guess to me history is like a scrapbook - people have pasted-in articles and poems and that's basically what made up this lasting perception we have of the past, so we should always look at history with some caution"

(Benjamin, software programmer from North Croydon)

"History is the intellectual approach to looking at the past. It's about asking how things change, and what makes them change, and what lessons we can learn from it. Heritage has a much stronger emphasis on material culture than written text... It is also about the market place, about selling the past... On the other hand, once you dig a little deeper, it is actually quite difficult to show that the discipline of history has any different approach from the way in which heritage is interpreted. There are huge emotional investments among historians in their subject matter, as well as huge imaginative and personal investment. There is just as much of a desire to re-enter history and to 'relive' that past, but it is denied. I think a lot of the scorn that professional historians pour upon heritage is to do with heritage being 'out' about the things that professional historians choose to deny. You know, the sort of populist edge of heritage, and the enjoyment of dressing up and of imagining and playing, which are very taboo in the predominantly male academic environment"

(Rachel Hasted, Lifetimes' principal museum officer)

Rachel's statement highlights the 'playful' element of popular heritage presentations, which many of my informants seemed to favour over the traditional museum displays:

"Visiting a history museum can be really boring, whereas visiting a heritage site, like a historic house, or a stately home, is a more interesting way of finding out about the past, because it sort of brings the past alive..."

(Alice, married mother of two from North Croydon)

"I quite like going to old houses and that sort of thing. Have you been to 'Yesterday's World'? It's an old house made into a museum of old-fashioned shops, so you can literally 'step back into the past'. I like that sort of thing. And I like wondering through stately homes and their grounds, you know. They have so much history and atmosphere... it's much better than walking round a big museum building full with glass cabinets and stuffed animals"

(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)

"Visiting a historic house is better than visiting a history museum, because it feels more 'real', you know?. You can walk around the different rooms and imagine the people that used to live there"

(Lynn, married mother of three from Central Croydon)

Pitman (1999) expresses similar notions in her recollections of visiting historic houses as a child (accompanied by her family). "I wandered through the rooms of old houses, engrossed in fantasies about the people who lived there hundreds of years ago... The fireplaces were filled with pots of hot food, long dresses rustled with each footstep, and I imagined the house filled with people and their conversations..." (1999: 21). Bagnall (1996) highlights the importance of such imaginings to the process of 'consuming the past', which she views as - "composed of physical, emotional and imaginary 'mappings', as well as a strong sense of reminisces, which separates this leisure choice from other forms of entertainment and cultural consumption" (Bangnall, 1996, in: Edgell, 1996: 245).

O'Brien's study (2002) into visitors' experience of historic house museums, reveals a parallel distinction - "Historic houses are different to museums. To visit Blenheim or Versailles, the modest Bronte parsonage, or Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House is different to visiting the British Museum, or the Metropolitan Museum of Art" (2002: 3).

It is, as one of the female visitors quoted in O'Brien's study quite eloquently termed - *"the difference between visiting the zoo and going on safari"* (ibid.: 34). Likewise, Hudson (1991) argues the significance of context and a *full* sensory experience: "Smells distinguish one culture and one country from another more thoroughly and effectively than any other characteristic (unfashionable as it may be to say this) but, with very rare exceptions, museums refuse to deal in smells... The senses are highly important in communication. Under normal conditions, that is, in our daily life, we make regular use of all five of them, but museums... restrict us to only two, sight and to a lesser extent sound. The result is that both their approach and ours is over-intellectualised. We are given no chance to feel, to taste, and to smell" (Hudson, 1991, in: Karp & Lavine, 1991: 461). The stimulation of all five senses intensifies the museum experience, as well as promotes a powerful sense of 'reality'.

Moore (1997) proposes a 'triple notion of the power of the real' - real people, real places, real stories, arguing that the most successful, most effective representations of the past, in museums or elsewhere, are those which employ this 'triple power'. "Museums typically have the real thing, but not in the original place. Heritage experiences - the theme park rides, which have a historical theme, have no real things, and often little, or no connection to the real place. Historic sites, such as ruined castles or battlefields, have a strong sense of place, but no collections... historic houses which possess their original collections, which combine the real place and the real thing" (1997: 137 and 142). The *'People's Show'* exhibitions (see Karp, et al 1992; and Mullen, 1994) frequently create this triad in proving a reconstructed 'real' place in which real people present their real collections.

Another way of experiencing - 'real people in relation to real things, in a real place' is through re-enactment and living history presentation (Moore, 1997: 142). Hughes (1998) highlights the capacity of such theatrical presentations to act as storytellers "tapping into an elemental human consciousness... The idea of the museum as storyteller... provides opportunities to question knowledge, to approach ethical dilemmas, and to explore ideas from different perspectives" (Hughes, 1998: 10-11). Similarly, Anderson (1984, 1985, 1991) emphasises the informative, evocative and creative attributes of living history presentations, which combine drama, ritual, pageantry and play, through the use of period costumes, props and 'sets' (the historic site itself) along with role playing, to create a powerful sense of 'reality' and empathy.

Films and television programmes with an historical interest, in particular period dramas, seem to have a similar, and equally powerful effect on its viewers. While most of my informants expressed their interest in, and enjoyment of viewing such programmes, others, like Stewart, were wary of their powerful, and potentially misleading impact:

> *"Film and television are too powerful, it stays in your mind. You see Queen Elizabeth I, do something on a film, or say something and that's there in your mind for good. You can't shift it, even though you know it's nonsense. I mean, Queen Victoria never said - "We are not amused" - but once she said it on film [where] you can <u>see</u> her, what she was wearing, what she was doing. She may look like Judi Dench, but in your mind she's Queen Victoria. So from that point of view I find it quite upsetting that these sort of things are 'planted' in our heads whether we wanted them to be there or not... Films are made to entertain and not educate. They're the complete opposite end of education as far as I'm concerned, so I distrust TV and film"*
>
> *(Stewart, book collector from Central Croydon)*

Stewart's views echo the on-going critique voiced by scholars such as Wright (1985), Hewison (1987), Eco (1987), Walsh (1992), Lowenthal (1998) and numerous others, who argue that the popular notion of 'witnessing' and 'experiencing' the past produces an artificial, inaccurate representation of history, which is promoted by the contemporary concept of 'time-travel' to an almost unconnected 'world' of the past that is distinct and detached from the present (see Wright, 1985: 77; and Walsh, 1992: 100).

In contrast, Urry (1990) has argued that heritage presentations are no different from other means of appropriating the past. "In the absence of the heritage industry just how is the past normally appropriated? It certainly is not through the academic study of 'history' as such. For many people it will be acquired at best through reading biographies and historical novels. It is not obvious that the heritage industry's account is any more misleading" (1990: 112). Merriman (1991) advocates a similar argument, demonstrating the variety of dynamic and creative ways in which individuals construct their perception of the past, employing a diverse range of sources, within the context of their life circumstances and experiences.

The ethnographic finding emerging from this study clearly endorse Merriman's (1991) core argument - that the public is not a passive homogeneous-mass, manipulated by misleading, ideological presentations, or 'hypnotised' by nostalgic images of the past. While my informants' accounts reflect their overall enjoyment of, and preference for heritage displays, they were usually critical in their viewing of such presentations, comparing them to their own knowledge, values and beliefs. As a result, their voiced 'imagining' of the past was neither romantic, nor nostalgic, as the next segment reveals.

Time Travel

"The journey has long fascinated us. Gulliver travelled, as did Thelma and Louise, Hansel and Gretel, John Steinbeck and Charlie, the Israelites, the Wilburys, Bilbo, Paul Theroux, Herodotus, Lassie, Captain Kirk, Captain Nemo... Peter Pan... Dorothy and Toto, and countless others... There is something about travel that continues to captivate us"

(Belk, 1997: 24)

Indeed, all of the people I interviewed seemed genuinely captivated by the notion of 'travelling through in time', often responding with a detailed, enthusiastic replay. While demographic traits such as age, gender, class, ethnicity and education influenced the choice of 'destination' (in terms of where and 'when' the interviewees wanted to go) they had very little, if any, affect on people's overall keen-reaction to this imaginative, playful concept:

Q: " If you could travel through time where and 'when' would you go?"

A: "I would visit Eighteenth Century London, around the time of the French Revolution. London in that period would have been really interesting, just because of it being so cosmopolitan for its time - loads of different things happening, loads of different personalities, there's revolution in the air, there's Americans about to declare independence"

(Hamish, Lifetimes' museum exhibition officer)

A: "My personal passion has always been for the Russian Revolution. I would simply adore to go to Moscow and St Petersburg in 1917 and just be a fly on the wall and look at the all the creativity and the strife and what have you. I've always thought that was a fascinating era"

(Rachel Hasted, Lifetimes' principal museum officer)

A: "I would like to go back to Croydon round about 1840, or in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, before it developed. I would only want to go back for a day I think, because I'm sure it would be smelly and horrid. I just want to see what it was really like when it was still a country town. I mean, there would probably be a few landmarks I would recognise, but not very many. I would really enjoy that"

(John, local history society member from Central Croydon)

A: "I'd like to visit the late Victorian and early Edwardian period, because that's when my Nan and Great Nan were alive. It would be interesting to see what their lives were <u>really</u> like. I mean, it always looks terribly gracious, with all those lovely dresses and things, but I'm sure it wasn't easy..."

(Erika, married mother of two from South Croydon)

A: "I would go back to the 1920s, in somewhere like London. It was such a carefree time, between the Wars, well obviously you'd have to have money, otherwise I'm sure it wouldn't be a very joyful time at all, but it was such a vibrant time. I'd also love to go back to the 1950s, which I think were about the very last of glamorous living for women. I certainly wouldn't want to go back to <u>live</u> in those times, because of all the restrictions on women, I mean, we've come such a long way since then but, for pure frivolity I would go back to the '20s and the '50s"

(Tanya, museum-staff member from South Croydon)

Notwithstanding the variations in people's chosen 'periods of interest' and motivations for visiting the past, it is vital to note that all of the people I interviewed, without exception, declared that they would only want to <u>visit</u> the past, not go back to live there. In fact, none of them wanted to live in any period other than the present, as John's concluding statement exemplifies: "I don't particularly want to live in the future, and I certainly don't want to live in the past, so I suppose the present is the best place really"

No Time Like The Present

"...images of the past are, surprisingly, not nostalgic but overwhelmingly adverse. Rather than wanting to retreat to the past as a haven from today's problems, most people believe they are much better off in the present"

(Merriman, 2000: 4)

The ethnographic finding emerging from this study emphatically endorse Merriman's conclusions. All of my informants' expressed a clear preference to living in the present, and their evaluation and 'imagining' of the past were usually realistic and down-to-earth, as the following interview segments demonstrate:

Q: "What do you think life was like in the past?"

A: "It depends on which strata of society you're in, I mean, you'd have a fine time in the Elizabethan period, or any other period, if you were very rich... It also depends on which part of the world you lived in. So I think it's pretty relative, and it has a lot to do with your expectations as well"

(Angela, museum professional from Central Croydon)

A: "I don't have a particularly romantic view of what it was like. I suppose one of the things that I feel very strongly about the past is the lack of physical comforts, you know. I mean I don't think I could cope to have lived, having the experience that I have now, in any period when safe anaesthesia wasn't invented... Also, if we're talking about being a woman, I have to say I think we live at one of the better moments in history. I think the economic independence for women, and their control over their own fertility is what makes the present enormously preferable if you happen to live in Britain... The rate of change has been extraordinary in some ways and depressingly small in others, but the present is still enormously preferable to the past"

(Rachel Hasted, Lifetimes' principal museum officer)

A: "In many ways it was worse. I mean, nowadays when people say they're poor it means they haven't got a car, or a washing machine, material things. Years ago if you were poor you couldn't put food on the table, or buy a pair of shoes. So in that respect, life in the past was much harder. And they had to do all these manual jobs. The women were washing and cleaning all day -

because it all took so much longer. Nowadays you just pop it in the washing machine, 40 minutes and you're done. Back then you had to wash everything by hand, they had no machines, no Hoovers, so everything was physically harder. I don't think I would like to have lived then"

(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)

A: "Well, virtually everything was worse. The children were malnourished, they had rickets, they could die of anything from 'flu to polio to tuberculosis. Women were mistreated and undervalued and have been for centuries, and the Lord of the Manor could do virtually anything he liked. So from that point of view I don't think there was anything that was better in the past... And this notion that we were 'closer to nature', what it really means is that you're at the mercy of nature, and that's not a nice thing. It means you're cold and wet and hungry for half of the year, and you don't know whether next year you're going to have a harvest or not, because of the insects, or the weather, or anything else that can take over. And then there's this notion that we were all in a sort of 'organic community'. Life in the past was very hierarchical, if you were at the top, you were at the top, and if you were at the bottom you had nothing, especially with a fairly rigid hierarchy. I don't think I would like that. I mean, the dirt and disease and chaos of the past is all very interesting, but I wouldn't want to live there"

(Stewart, book collector from Central Croydon)

If people's present perception of the past is so lucid and sombre, is there no more 'longing' for bygone days? No more *'Yearning For Yesterday'*? Quite the contrary. Nostalgia - "from the Greek nostos, to return home, and algia, a painful condition, thus, a painful yearning to return home" (Davis, 1979: 1) is still an important part of people's discourse, only it is more commonly manifested on a personal scale, rather than a national one. It is a personal nostalgia for a personal - *past*, *place* and *people*. A private yearning to return to a private home, more often than not - a childhood home, as the following modules, and especially the concluding ethnographic account, demonstrate.

A Tale of Two Cities [2]

"I'm fiercely proud of Croydon, it's a wonderful place..."

(Richard, Central Croydon Resident)

"I know I'm officially a resident of Croydon, but in my heart I'm not"

(Rebecca, South Croydon Resident)

Croydon is not one, unified place, but rather an amalgamation of places, encompassing a mosaic of histories, communities and landscapes - from suburban neighbourhoods, parks and woodlands, to urban areas, skyscrapers, car parks and shopping precincts. The northern and southern halves of Croydon (which were previously a London borough, and a part of Surrey, respectively) were merged into one municipality in 1965. The two sectors were, and still are, very different in demographic terms. South Croydon is significantly more affluent than North Croydon, which in turn is more densely populated and more ethnically diverse. It is not surprising then, that for many residents the old 'North/South' divide is still very 'real', while the 'borough of Croydon' is often perceived as merely an administrative entity (see Fussell, 1995; and MacDonald, 1998).

The following core-module explores local people's voiced perception and practice of 'place' in general, and of Croydon in particular. The review examines Croydon's complexities of 'place' and 'space', including both the meaningful places within the borough, and the meaningless non-place that, for many residents, is the borough. The discussion highlights the local manifestations of the 'Croydon experience' from its residents' diverse points of view.

The Position of Place

"Place is an irreducible part of human experience... Place is about situatedness in relation to identity and action. In this sense place is context"

(Tilley, 1994: 17-18)

Our sense of self is closely linked to our sense of 'place', which is ascribed with an array of different meanings, ranging from physical and emotional to intellectual, cultural, symbolic and political (cf. Buttimer & Seamon, 1980; Carter, 1993; and Knox, 1995).

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[2] *A variation on a theme from Charles Dickens' - "**A Tale of Two Cities**" (1859).*

The diversity of these dimensions of perception, and the significance of 'place sense' they reveal is reflected in the considerable amount of 'place words' that exists in the English language. "There are all sorts of words such as milieu, locality, location, locale, neighbourhood, region, territory and the like, which refer to the generic qualities of place. There are other terms such as city, village, town, megalopolis and state, which designate particular kinds of places. There are still others, such as home, hearth, 'turf', community, nation and landscape, which have such strong connotations of place that it would be hard to talk about one without the other" (Harvey, 1993: 4). However, these 'place words' are more than just linguistic representations of the perception and practice of 'place', they are signifiers of the emotional involvement and attachment to a particular place. For it is through the practice, perception and attachment to a certain locale that spaces and places are constructed, appropriated and endowed with meanings.

Bender (1993) similarly maintains that "landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate it and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation state... Sometimes the engagement will be very conscious, a way of laying claims, of justifying and legitimating a particular place in the world, sometimes, almost unconscious - part of the routine of everyday existence" (1993: 2-3). Likewise, Edensor (2002) emphasises that national identities are established within a dynamic 'cultural matrix' of images, concepts, spaces, things, discourses and practices (2002: 17).

Daniels (1994) offers a related analysis, demonstrating the link between a sense of national identity and a sense of past and place. "National identities are often largely defined by legends and landscapes, by stories of golden ages, enduring traditions, heroic deeds and dramatic destinies, located in ancient or promised home-lands, with hallowed sites and scenery... Landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide the visible shape, they 'picture' the nation" (1994: 5). Correspondingly, Merriman (1996) observes that in the nation's 'vision' of itself - people are either absent, or take second place to landscape, wildlife and material culture, in the promotion of a notion of a deep, unchanging 'Englishness' (Merriman, 1996: 383). The concern with protecting and preserving nature and heritage - not so much 'as it is' but rather 'as it was' - is, according to Frake (1996), the personification of 'Englishness', seeing that it is through these landscapes, footpaths, plants, animals, monuments and old buildings that the nation's 'imagined past of pleasant places' is construct (Frake, 1996, in: Feld & Basso, 1996: 229-230). This prevalent engagement with heritage and nature

highlights a bias in British culture, endorsing a sense of nostalgic longing for rural life, alongside an often cynical view of urban life (cf. Pahl, 1973; Knox, 1995). This sense of longing is captured in Raymond Williams' classic work *"The Country And The City"* (1973), which interlaces social history with landscape geography and literature to demonstrate the complexities and historical changes of what Williams has termed the *'Rural/Urban Paradigm'*. The desire to escape this dichotomy and create a balanced, 'best of all worlds' middle-ground, which is neither urban nor rural, has lead to the conceptual emergence of *'Suburbia'* and its later realisation in the development of suburban neighbourhoods, hamlets and towns, such as Croydon.

The nineteenth-century origins of the modern suburb are linked to the expansion of cities and the emergence of new forms of transportation, but above all, the suburb is linked to the rise of the middle-class and its anti-urban, bourgeois aesthetic and ethic, which emphasises the values of 'privacy as individuality' and 'property-ownership as independence' (see Cross, 1997: 108-109; and Attfield, 2002: 188-189). Silverstone (1997) highlights the paradoxes and contradictions that define suburban culture. "Suburbia is, quite rightly, seen as both an essential product of urban expansion and at the same time an escape from, and protest against it" (Fishman, 1987, in: Silverstone, 1997: 5). The credited motives for suburbanisation include "the desire for domestic seclusion, retaining rural life, and distance from plebeian disorder and aristocratic decadence. Suburban homes were to recreate families free from the distractions and threats of the city" (Cross, 1997: 109). Frankenberg (1969) has similarly observed that "the desire for a semi-detached in its own garden, and the summer weekend trek out of the towns, are part of the national stereotype of ourselves as longing to get back to the country life" (1969: 11). Attfield (2002) argues that while the concept of the suburb embodied the romantic notion of a picturesque, tamed countryside, its realisation created a mass-reproduction of 'ideal homes'. Reviled by its critics for its perceived aspirant pretensions and its middle-of-the-road populism, 'Suburbia' became a metaphor for the inauthentic, repetitive, banal tastes (or lack there of) of white, south-eastern, English bourgeois (see Medhurst, 1997: 267; Faith, 1997: 270; and Attfield, 2002: 190).

Croydon too became the butt of jokes, regularly characterised in the press and media as the ultimate epitome of 'Soulless Suburbia'. The mocking media coverage had a further distancing effect on both visitors and residents, worsening Croydon's, already complicated, 'identity crisis' (see section one).

A Transitional 'Non-Place'

People's initial encounter with Croydon is often an extremely 'urbanised' experience. Arriving at the borough's main train station and walking into the 1960s style town centre creates an undoubtedly urban sense of place, which frequently dominates people's lasting impression, and overall perception of Croydon:

Q: "What was your perception of Croydon -

***before** you joined the museum team?"*

A: "Grey! [Laughs]. My first memories of Croydon are from when I was a teenager. I remember it being very grey and dark. It always seemed to rain whenever I was here, passing through on the train, on my way to London"

(Hamish, Lifetimes' museum exhibition officer)

A: "I don't think I had any perception of it at all. I'd been through it on the train once - 'by accident' [Laughs]. I knew it was where the Home Office was and I'd been to IKEA once... It was nowhere I'd ever want to come to, unless I had a specific reason"

Q: "What was your first impression of Croydon?"

A: "Depressing. I remember getting out at East Croydon Station and walking down the hill to the [Clocktower] centre... I found the architecture particularly depressing... It was just so - grey"

(Tanya, young museum-staff member)

Similar impression were voiced by many of my informants (visitors and staff alike), revealing the entrenched notion of 'placelessness' that is often associated with Croydon. In many accounts Croydon was referred to as a grey, transitional, 'non-place' that people only pass through 'by accident', or for a specific reason, such as visiting the home office, going shopping, or travelling on to somewhere else. When asked what was the first thing that came to mind when they thought of Croydon, an overwhelming majority of interviewees responded with either - *'Shopping'* (63%), or - *'Skyrise Buildings'* (35%). Other responses included - *'The Home Office'* (1%) and - *'Croydon Airport'* (1%).

Despite the borough's vast amount of open spaces, parks and gardens (5400 acres [3]), the image of Croydon that many people seemed to retain in their memory was the conspicuously urbanised features of its commerce centre, as Kenneth Hudson once described, in a letter to the *Croydon Museum Service* - "The culture shock of walking through England's version of downtown Dallas was fairly considerable. It is truly hideous and depressing, a never-ending series of architectural crimes" (Hudson, in: Fussell, 1992: 2). Many of the people I interviewed, including surveyed visitors to the *Lifetimes* museum and various long-term informants, expressed corresponding views:

"In terms of the environment, I think it's horrible. I mean visually horrible - all those ugly buildings"

(Male visitor to Lifetimes, in his early thirties)

"It's a strange sort of place. It doesn't seem to have any kind of character, apart from those tall tower-buildings"

(Female visitor to Lifetimes, in her early forties)

"It was a bit of a shock for me when I moved up from Tunbridge Wells, because there you obviously don't have any Skyrise buildings. So that was the first shock... And it was just maniacally busy. It was so much more relaxed in Tunbridge Wells, but here, you know, everyone is in such a rush, so that was a bit of a shock really"

(Rose, Clocktower employee and resident of Central Croydon)

Still, many of the local residents I interviewed expressed an overall positive attitude towards the borough's shopping, transport and entertainment facilities, regardless of how critical they were about its 1960s architecture:

"Croydon is very good for shops and that sort of urban living type of thing. And it's got good transport links, so from that point of view it's all right"

(Stewart, book collector from Central Croydon)

"The shopping is absolutely brilliant. I mean the stores here are really good, and there are so many restaurants and pubs, it's like a mini-London really"

(Brenda, Clocktower employee and resident of Central Croydon)

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[3] *Source: Croydon Mini Guide, 1998.*

"I remember my Granny going on about Croydon being a fantastic town for shops even back in the 1930s. Apparently it was the best place, even better than the West End. My English Grandparents came from the East End and they always said that the best place to go shopping wasn't Harrods, or the West End shops - it was Croydon - so it was like a Londoner's little secret"

(Hamish, Lifetimes' museum exhibition officer)

A: "At the end of the day - Croydon is Croydon. I mean, I know Croydon inside out, and I just love going round the shops and café's. I love that 'market town' atmosphere... And the big shopping centres are just as great!"

(Susie, married mother of two from South Croydon)

Susie's statement highlights an important issue affecting people's perception of Croydon - *familiarity*. The more familiar a place becomes, the more it is perceived as safe, comfortable, friendly and 'community oriented' in its atmosphere. This was especially evident with the staff members I interviewed (most of whom were not residents of Croydon prior to joining the *Clocktower* centre) and in particular the museum professionals, who were directly involved with researching and presenting Croydon's - *past*, *place* and *people*. The more involved they became with Croydon - *physically* travelling around the borough, interviewing people and collecting materials for the museum - the fonder they grew of it. For many staff members this meant a considerable 'shift' from their initial perception and preconceptions of Croydon, which were frequently quiet negative. This then reinforces the significance of practice to the process in which perception and attachment are constructed:

"I do feel an affection for Croydon. I've been working here for a long time, so I am very familiar with it, and very comfortable with it... When I was doing the interviews, I was out most days of the week, taking the bus all over the place, so I got to know, like, every bit of the borough really well"

(Jeff, museum-staff member)

"The longer I've been here the more I realise that Croydon actually has a fascinating history. I mean, you automatically think that because there's Skyrise buildings - it's modern, so it's got nothing going for it, but that just isn't true!"

(Rose, Clocktower employee)

"The more I get to know the area the more I like it. It's definitely not as grim a place as I perceived it to be before I moved here"

(Greg, Clocktower employee)

"Croydon's much nicer than I ever thought it would be. It's a fantastic place. And when you start to look round, you find that there are many beautiful buildings... And it's much more vibrant that I ever expected it would be. It's much, much nicer, much more of a community"

(Tanya, museum-staff member)

Us & Them

"The ethnography of locality is an account of how people experience and express their difference from others, and of how their sense of difference becomes incorporated into, and informs the nature of their social organisation and process"

(Cohen, 1982: 2)

"Self-definition comes in relation to the other - the people and places outside the boundaries (real and perceived) that we establish"

(Ralph, 1976, in: Knox, 1995: 215).

Our sense of place is firmly linked with notions of boundaries, belonging and identity, which define, distinguish, and separate 'us' from 'them'. Ralph (1976) identifies a range of place-experience categories along a continuum between *'insideness'* and *'outsideness'* thereby illustrating the direct correlation between the meaning people assign to a place, and the degree of how 'inside' that place they feel.

Croydon's 'North/South' division is often perceived, and presented, as the borough's greatest divide. While this is certainly the case in socio-economic and ethnic terms, there are other 'boundaries' within Croydon, which seem to form a far more significant divide for the borough's residents, in terms of their sense of belonging and identity. Croydon's true divide it seems, is not so much its demographic 'North/South' division, but rather a 'Core/Perimeter' divide, one that (more or less) separates the centre of the borough from its surrounding neighbourhoods.

"Not Really Croydon"

Most of the people I met who live in the neighbourhoods that surround central Croydon frequently distanced themselves from any association with the borough. Most of them for example *never* included the word *Croydon* when writing, or verbally providing their home address, naming their local neighbourhood instead. In other words they would say they are from Norwood, or Shirley, or Purely, or Kenley - but not from Croydon, thereby distinguishing themselves, and their local neighbourhood, from what they perceive as - *really* Croydon - the central area of borough. Time and time again I was told by these informants how their area isn't *really* Croydon and therefore they aren't *really* Croydoners, as the following interview segment illustrates:

> *Q: "How do you feel about the area you live in? And how do you feel about Croydon in general?"*
>
> *A: "I like this area a lot, because of all the greens, and the commons, and the parks... It's very beautiful out here, and very peaceful... But Croydon itself I don't like at all"*
>
> *Q: "Why not?"*
>
> *A: "I don't know, it's pretty dingy, isn't it? I mean, it's dirty and crowded... It's full of horrible people"*
>
> *Q:" You know that officially this area is part of Croydon as well?"*
>
> *A: "Well, yes, but we don't think of it as - Croydon. I mean, my Mum lives in Shirley, and I suppose you could think of Shirley as - Croydon, but we don't. Croydon is - Central Croydon. So, if someone says they live in Croydon, then it means that they live in the middle bit of Croydon - in East Croydon or West Croydon* [the central neighbourhoods] *but if they live in Purely, or Shirley, or Kenley - then that isn't really Croydon. I mean, we'd never put 'Croydon' on our address"*
>
> *(Jane, married mother of two from South Croydon)*

Young & Willmott (1957) describe a similar experience with their Bethnal Green informants:

"It's all right on this side of the canal' said Mrs Gould, who lives in Bow. 'I wouldn't like to live on the other side of the canal. It's different there' Another man, in a letter asking for help in getting another home, wrote 'I am not particular where you send me, the farther the better. I do not mind if it is as far as Old Ford as I have left my wife and wish to keep as far away as possible.' Old Ford is five minutes' walk from his wife"

(Young & Willmott, 1957: 110-111)

For others, like Jasmine, a young, Asian, university student, who lives with her parents in South Croydon, being a 'Croydoner' does not enter the 'identity equation'. Instead, the distinction lies between being a - 'Surrey person' and being a - 'London person' (meaning a 'country girl', or a 'city girl', respectively):

Q: "How do you feel about the area you live in? And how do you feel about Croydon in general?"

A: "I love it. It's really green and peaceful... It's very different to Croydon, but I guess Croydon's okay too"

Q: "You know that officially this area is part of Croydon as well"

A: "I guess it <u>is</u> part of Croydon, yes - the London borough of Croydon. But address-wise it's Surrey, isn't it? It's kind of odd I guess. And it's really amusing sometimes. Like my friend, Caroline, who I went to school with, whenever I said we live in London, she'd say - 'No we don't, we live in Surrey'. And I say - 'But we're part of the London Borough of Croydon, therefore we're part of Greater London, so we live in London'. You see, there's, sort of - 'Surrey people', and then there's - 'London people'."

Q: "So, are you a 'London person' or a 'Surrey person'?"

A: "I like to think of myself as living in Greater London. I suppose because I feel more affinity to the city, whereas Caroline is more a of 'country girl', so she takes the view that she's part of Surrey, but I'm definitely a 'city girl'. Not that I have anything against the country, but I think given the choice I would much rather live in the city"

"Ever So Green"

On the other side of this 'boundary' are the *'Central Croydoners'*, who comprise two sub-groups of their own: the *'Native'* residents, who have been living in Croydon for a considerable period of time; and the *'Newcomer'* residents, who have chosen to make Central Croydon their home more recently. The *'Central Croydoners'* I met expressed a completely opposite view of Croydon, one that is altogether more positive. *'Natives'* and *'Newcomers'* alike were quick to point out the advantages of their central location, from the variety of local activities and amenities, to their ease of access to London, Brighton and 'the country'. The abundance of well-kept parks, gardens and open spaces, was often emphasised as well, in defiance to the urbanised, grey, inner-city image that is commonly ascribed to central Croydon:

> *"We've got a lot of open spaces here, and the parks and gardens are extremely well looked after, and there are plenty of trees. Looking out here you can see virtually nothing but trees... Croydon has various advantages, it's near the country, it's near London, and it has pretty much every kind of entertainment you'd want. We've now got a very good museum, a wonderful library, which won all kinds of awards... There are a lot worse places"*
>
> *(Nan, 'Native' Resident)*

> *"I think it's got a lot going for it. There are a lot of different people from a lot of different places. And there are a lot of beautiful, green spaces. A lot of people think - 'oh, central Croydon is built-up and ugly' and all the rest of it, but actually it's ever so green"*
>
> *(Lynn, 'Newcomer')*

> *"Well I like it. I wouldn't have stayed here if I hadn't liked it. I think it's nice. It's got it's own sort of atmosphere, more like a provincial town, and it's fairly green. It's a very pleasant place, very pleasant indeed"*
>
> *(John, 'Native' Resident)*

> *"I love Croydon. It's near the coast and the country. It's quarter of an hour from London by train, you've got wonderful transport, and there's a whole feast of things you can do right here as well. It's wonderful to walk round the town and the parks... Croydon has a lot going for it"*
>
> *(Richard, 'Native' Resident)*

Longing For Belonging

According to Lovell (1998), belonging to a particular locality evokes a notion of loyalty and attachment, creating a kind of emotional gravity. Keller's study (1968) addresses the factors that bind people to a certain locale, and create a sense of pride and attachment that transcends physical inconvenience or social undesirability (Keller, 1968: 108). Such attachment, Keller suggests, may be rooted in childhood experiences in the area, or in historical events that endow the place with a special meaning. The attachment may also stem from current 'attractions', such as a particular aesthetic or cultural component, or the presence of favoured friends (ibid.), as the following accounts exemplify:

> *"There's a good mixture of people and cultures here. West Croydon in particular has all these different, mostly 'ethnic' shops and supermarkets, you know, so you can wander out down the street and find some sort of curious fruit you've never heard of, or whatever. It's little things like that I really like about West Croydon"*
>
> *(Greg 'Newcomer')*

> *"It's just incredibly convenient for absolutely everything! I can get into town very easily, I can get to Brighton very easily, I can literally walk to the country in ten minutes, or walk into the centre of Croydon in ten minutes. My Salsa lessons are only ten minutes away, the gym - ten minutes, nothing's much more than ten minutes away. Everything is here, like IKEA - I mean it might not be the 'style capital of the world', but... my friend Jane borrows her Dad's car and we make a day of it, we 'do' all the superstores... So I feel very positive about East Croydon. I have a lot of fun here, and I have a lot of friends here... and my best friend lives just around the corner!"*
>
> *(Angela, 'Newcomer')*

This kind of 'insideness', of localised attachment and identity is defined as 'localism', which, according to Wallman (1998) implies both the sense of belonging and the right to belong. 'Localism', she claims, is both cause and effect of the relation between people and place, at once defining/identifying its adherents, and being defined/identified by them (Wallman, 1998, in: Rapport & Dawson, 1998: 198-199). Highlighting its centrality to contemporary British cultures, Macdonald (1997a) suggests that 'localism' has become the dominant theme of the anthropology of Britain (1997a: 130-132).

Macdonald's studies (1997a, 1997b and 1997c) into identities, allegiances and localism draw attention to the practice and, especially, the discourse of belonging and 'localness' - of who is and who is not 'part of the place', who is and who is not 'authentically local' (1997a: 130). These notion are closely linked to the complex concept of community, which is equally hard to define (see Cohen, 1982, 1989; Rapport & Dawson, 1998; Archibald, 1999; Bauman, 2002; and Amit, 2002). "Everyone would like to be in one, but nobody is quite sure exactly what it is. 'Community' is a curious word. Constantly evoked to suggest a condition suffused with warm, fuzzy feelings and yet always eluding hard and fast definitions, its vagueness lends itself to all sorts of uses... To be part of a community implies a kind of belonging that is more wished for than actually achieved, a feeling of connectedness that is more dreamed of than materially attained" (Mercer, 1995, in: Boltanski, 1995: 12).

According to classic sociological and anthropological theory, communities should not exist at all within an urban context, or at best only as a weak form. The writings of Tönnies (1963/1887), Durkheim (1984/1893) and Wirth (1969/1938), all express a notion of - *'community lost'*. However, later writings on communities and urban life provided ample examples of socially cohesive *'urban villages'* as Gans (1962) defined them. Jacobs (1961) correspondingly portrayed the city as an inherently human place, where sociability and friendliness are a natural consequence of social organisation at the neighbourhood level (see Knox, 1995: 204-206). Ethnographic accounts of communities in rural and urban Britain, such as Strathern's ethnography of Elmdon (1981), William's 'sociology' of Gosforth (1969) and Young & Willmott's ethnography of Bethnal Green (1957), all support the notion that communities are still very much part of social and cultural life, regardless if the interactions take place within an urban or a rural context. Nevertheless, the former, evocative notion of a *'community lost'* is still prevalent, especially among the middle-age and older generations. Many of my 'native resident' informants, who have lived in Croydon all, or most of their lives, spoke of Croydon's rapid growth and how in the course of this dramatic change Croydon has lost something of its old charm and 'close-knit' community atmosphere, something of its 'soul':

> *"I've been here fifty years and I've watched Croydon grow and change. And we, the older generation, we liked it much more before the expansion... It was much smaller back then, and much quieter... more of a community. It's too impersonal now"*
>
> *(Helen, 'Native' Resident)*

"It was such a charming place, small, peaceful, friendly, with a real sense of community... Croydon has changed immensely. You would not recognise it. If you had left in 1945 and came back now you wouldn't recognise the place. The old Croydon has been demolished and the new was put up in the 1960s. And that's fine. Progress is fine. But what has happened is that in creating a new Croydon they have thrown out what made Croydon, Croydon. And I think the 'soul' went out of Croydon, because at one time there were people living in and amongst those shops..."

(Nan, 'Native' Resident)

"Croydon has changed... the community used to be much more close-knit, and if you look back to my Grandmother's time, the difference is even greater! She used to say that people just popped in, you know, you'd leave your front door open and people would just walk in and out, no problem. Nowadays, I don't even know the people living on my street. I've been living here, at the same address, for almost twenty years, and I couldn't tell you... I mean, I know our next door neighbours, on either side - well, I know them enough to say hello to them, but I don't know their names or anything"

(Erika, 'Native' Resident)

This contemporary notion of segregation and isolation, of - what Giddens (1991) has termed - *'fragmented'* or *'disembedded'* identities, heightens the 'need' and longing for community and belonging. This in turn may explain my informants' uncharacteristically idealised, nostalgia for a not-so-distant past, when life was seemingly calmer and slower and communities were smaller and closer:

"There was more of a community in a way... we knew quite a lot of people... My mother and I used to walk down to South Norwood when I was a kid, you know, to do the shopping, and we would go into the shop and my mother would say good morning and they would say - 'Ah, good morning Mrs Gent', and everything was weighed out. You'd spend hours in there sometimes... Everything was much slower sort of pace. I'm not saying it was better from that point of view, but you had time to talk. And then on the way down to the shops you'd always meet some people you knew and you'd always meet them on the way back"

(John, 'Native' Resident)

However, John's somewhat-nostalgic recollection of his childhood experiences of going shopping with his mother, and walking through the streets of Croydon, are not so different from Angela's *current* experience:

> *"I'm continually bumping into people I know and it's just lovely, whereas when I lived in North London there was always a sense of anonymity, which is nice sometimes, but it can also feel quite lonely and uncaring as well. I like it here more, I like the fact that - I noticed it when I first came here - that people have that little bit more time for you. Like if you were at a supermarket check-out they'd chat with you, or something like that - just that little bit more. It isn't intrusive or anything, it's just nice"*
>
> *(Angela, 'Newcomer')*

Perhaps the 'longing' expressed by the older generation of long-term Croydon-residents is not merely for the particular, personal, *past*, *place* and *people* of their childhood days, but also, and especially, a longing for a sense of identity and belonging - to a particular *past*, *place* and *people*.

Such notions are a further manifestation of Croydon's prevailing 'identity crisis' and sense of 'community loss', which underline the challenges *Lifetimes* has had to contend with, in attempting to capture the 'identity' of Croydon and produce an *accessible* and *meaningful* local history museum.

The following, final module centres upon an extraordinary case study of 'longing' and 'memory collecting', which led to both, the creation of a private 'local history museum' of symbolic roots and memories, within the context of the collector's home, and the collector's active participation in *Lifetimes'* presentation. However, the significance of this ethnographic account lies in its embodiment of the threads that bind this study - the production, consumption and experience of local history museums; alongside the perception and appropriation of *past*, *place* and *people*, and their centrality to a sense of identity and belonging.

Home Sweet Home [4]

"Our house is our corner of the world... our first universe, a real cosmos"

(Bachelard, 1994: 4)

"The word 'home'... brings to mind one's childhood, the roots of one's being, the security of a private enclave where one can be free and in control of one's life"

(Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1999: 121)

A home encompasses an array of different materials, from furniture and fixtures to ornaments and décor, collectively creating a dwelling experience that is greater than the sum of its parts. For these are more than mere 'things', they are a collection of appropriated materials, invested with meaning and memory, a material testament of who we are, where we have been and perhaps even where we are heading. They are what transforms our house into our *home* - a private cosmos that houses our memories of bygone times, as well as our hopes for what is yet to come. They bind our past with our present, and our possible futures, thereby framing and reflecting our sense of self.

To lose a home is to lose a private museum of memory, identity and creative appropriation (see Chevalier, 1996 and 1998). To lose a childhood home, our first secure corner of the world, is to lose a fundamental part of ourselves and our history. Thus, the memory of a childhood home becomes the remembrance of childhood, the remembrance of a lost part of ourselves. Remembering a bygone 'home-scape' is then an act of re-appropriation, of sowing symbolic roots into a vanished world (Bahloul, 1996).

While there is ample literature devoted to 'memory and narrative' (Myerhoff, 1978, 1992; Conway, 1990; Haight & Webster, 1995; Rubin, 1989, 1995; Gullestad, 1994, 1996); 'memory and loss' (cf. Malkinson, 1993; Klass, 1996); 'memory and the senses' (see Seremetakis, 1994; Petridou, 2001; and Sutton, 2001); 'memory and objects' (e.g. Hoskins, 1998; and Kavanagh, 2000), as well as 'memory and the home' (cf. Bahloul, 1996; Steedman, 1995, 1998; Cieraad, 1999; Archibald, 1999; Miller, 2001) the relationship between these core aspects is seldom acknowledged, let alone analysed. The following, in-depth case study aims to determine the interaction between narratives, materials and sensory manifestations, and demonstrate their significance in the practice of history and remembrance, within a domestic context of a private 'memory museum'.

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[4] *An earlier version of this material was published under the title - **"Home Sweet Home: Tangible Memories of An Uprooted Childhood"** In: **Miller, Daniel (ed.) (2001) "Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors"***

Advocating a contextual, holistic approach, the review voices Nan's perception and consequent presentation of key events in her life, especially those of her childhood. Thus, Nan articulates a sensory journey from the home of her childhood past to the home of her adult present, the latter, which embodies her memoirs and self-identity as both narrator and collector, serves as a 'point of entry', an imaginary 'bridge' to the past. The following analysis explores the corresponding roles of material culture and oral narratives in personal reminiscences, and as a means of coping with, and compensating for loss. Particular emphasis is then placed upon remembrance and the creative production of memorial-like tributes that are simultaneously personal and collective.

A World of Memory

Nan is a bright, energetic woman in her early seventies. A native of Edinburgh, as her accent occasionally reveals, she describes herself as a 'proud Scot', even though she has been a permanent resident of South East London from the age of twelve. She is, by her own account - an amateur artist, a frustrated musician and - "a bit of a hoarder". Above all Nan is a storyteller; a guardian, not only of her own family legacy, but also of her generation's legacy, for Nan's narrated memoirs and their material manifestations go beyond her personal story, telling the story of an era, the story of a generation. Nan's continuous interaction with the past, as well as its preservation and presentation through various sensory means, transforms her private recollection into an almost collective, memorial-like remembrance, as the following ethnographic account demonstrates.

I first met Nan at a *'1950s reminiscing event'* at *Lifetimes*. Nan has been involved with the museum from its early days, lending objects (and stories) for the permanent display, as well as participating in various events and, eventually, becoming a part-time 'relief' gallery assistant, covering for absent 'front of house' staff-members. Nan, who led the reminiscing session that day, was setting up an amazing array of 1950s materials - from ration books and Nylons, to periodical magazines, make-up cases, hair-pins, hair-nets and several dresses, not to mention healing ointments and vapour rubs, as well as coins, stamps, toys, dolls, songbooks and even a few vinyl records and an old record player. It was not long before the museum came to life with past-time colours, sounds and smells. The reminiscing session that followed was as lively and stimulating as its object-based presentation. Equally impressive was the fact that all of the materials featured on the reminiscing presentation that day were Nan's personal belongings - a

"mishmash of knick-knacks" to use her phrase, which she had 'hoarded' over the years. "You should see my house!" she laughed, as we reloaded her car. "I'd love to" I replied, and so began our shared exploration of the past and its embodiment within Nan's extraordinary home.

Nan and John have been living in their current home in South East Croydon, since 1967. Much like its owners, the two-level terrace house is warm and welcoming and full of stories. Jam-packed with books, photographs, past-time ornaments and several, unusual collections, Nan and John's home is truly a 'cosmos' of memory, an 'Aladdin's Cave' of reminiscence. I was privileged to spend many hours in this house, surrounded by Nan's collections and recollections, as she narrated her memoirs and shared their material and sensory manifestations with me. By doing so Nan had taken me not only into her home, but also into her world of memory and meaning.

Nan's comprehensive narration of her life history is far too extensive to be delivered in full within the boundaries of a thesis. The following life-review will therefore focus on what Nan regards as the most significant period of her life - her childhood years in Scotland, a time that encompasses the most joyful episodes of her life, as well as the most painful and harrowing ones. The uniqueness of Nan's autobiography lies in its twofold nature as both, *ordinary* - in terms of portraying an experience of historical events that was shared by many of Nan's contemporaries; and, *extraordinary* - in terms of Nan's individual life-story and her unique engagement with the past. In this sense, Nan's narration and material expositions are an embodiment of an era, simultaneously reflecting both personal and collective experiences, as well as a specific way of life that is characteristic of working-class Britain in the 1930s and 1940s.

Nan was born in Edinburgh in the summer of 1933. Until the age of seven she lived with her parents and her two younger brothers in a small, two-room flat in the - *'Dr Begg's Buildings'* of Abbeyhill. The buildings' five stairs of tenements were located in the centre of what was locally known as the *'Wee World'*:

> *"It really was a 'Wee World', virtually, because it had everything we needed - a school, shops, butchers, greengrocers, a public washhouse. There really wasn't much need to go further out. We had everything right there in our Wee World - a dance hall, a cinema, the King's Park... and the railway of course! I can remember the old trains, the Mallard and the Green Arrow"*

Life in the buildings was often one of hardship and poverty, though rarely one of deprivation. This is clearly reflected in the expressive memoirs of a contemporary of Nan's, Billy Hunter (1998), who spent his childhood years in the *'Dr Begg's buildings'*:

> *"I was lucky because the houses in our stair had two windows that looked out into the street, so it was always very bright. These rooms though could be ice cold and the fire had to be on constantly in the winter... [And to get to the outside toilets at night] you had to go along the landing IN THE DARK!"*
>
> *(Hunter, 1998: 14)*

However, Nan's portrayal of her early childhood home minimises such hardships. Instead, it accentuates the warmth and the light, as well as the close physical proximity and family ties, within both the family home and the 'Wee World' as a whole

> *"Every Sunday morning I would invariably run into the - 'kitchen/living-room/bedroom' and jump on my Dad, in the bed. Mum was getting breakfast ready, in sight of us, all in the same room. I can remember that sunny room, Mum cooking a full breakfast (because that was what we had in Scotland - a <u>full</u> breakfast) and me playing with my Dad... Then, every Sunday afternoon, my Dad would take me up on his shoulders, walking all the way down to where my grandmother lived, where the rest of his sisters had gathered with their families"*

Nan's nostalgic portrayal coincides with the typical working-class representation in historical and fictional narratives, where the warmth, light and shininess of the interior grants it an almost magical quality, regardless of its modesty. Thus, the glowing fire, illuminating the multitude of objects in the small family room, creates a sense of warm enclosure, intimacy and care (see Bachelard, 1994; and Steedman, 1998). These notions echo the nineteenth century ideals of *'home at its best'*, as they were portrayed in the literary works of that era, and especially in the novels of Charles Dickens, such as *'Oliver Twist'* (1837) and *'David Copperfield'* (1849). For Dickens an 'ideal home' is a place of secure enclosure and love - "a symbolic substitute for the security and union of the womb, as with David Copperfield who speaks of *'My little bed in the closet within my mother's room'...*" (Armstrong, 1990: 25). Nan's evocative depiction of her childhood promotes a corresponding sense of warmth and security:

"Looking back on the whole of my life, the years I spent as a child in Edinburgh were the happiest time of my life. You had protection. You had family round you, who you knew loved you. You were safe and secure, with no responsibilities and no experience of the hardships of life. You were cocooned, at least for a little while"

Another essential feature of the 'ideal home' that appears both in Nan's narration and in the written literature is the emphasis on cleanliness and order, the presence or absence of which often serves as an indicator of moral quality. This is especially evident in Nan's remarks on her mother's domestic skills and her own, consequent upbringing:

"My mother was very particular. She was very clean. She had been in domestic service before she married and her mother had been in domestic service too. And when you were in service you learned how to do it properly. And you also learned how to cope - the hard way. So we were all brought up with this sort of background. We were taught right from the beginning to look after what we had. It was a case of 'make do and mend'. If you've got a rip you sew it up, you didn't throw it out like you do now"

This typical working-class dogma of thrift and resourcefulness, of 'making do' is manifest in Nan's testimony of her childhood play as well:

"We often made our own toys and invented our own games. If we found a tin or a bottle, we'd play with it... We played a lot of street games. There was always plenty of space to play. Each block had a front green. Well, it wasn't really a green. It was just a piece of concrete, where our parents used to hang out the washing, with poles that were permanently there... Looking back now, the kind of surroundings that we had were pretty grim really, so many people living in such close proximity... but it was all we knew, and it was all family. Many of the people in the buildings were related to one another, and even those who weren't were very close. We literally lived in each other's homes. It was a very close-knit community"

The oscillation in Nan's account between the negative, physical attributes of her depicted locality, and the positive, almost nostalgic, qualities she ascribes to the local community, is not a contradiction in terms, but rather a term of contradiction, emphasising the positive human dimension over the negative physical hardship.

A similar notion is discussed in Bahloul's (1996) study of immigrants' memoirs - "To have lived in Dar-Refayil becomes an adventure, a triumph. Narratives focus on the way people socialised dearth, closure and lack of privacy. They constitute themselves as a lesson in humanity... symbolically restoring the integrity of a shattered geography" (Bahloul, 1996: 28-29).

Shattered Home

Sadly, Nan's childhood home soon became a shattered one. World War Two meant dramatic changes for many families throughout Britain, and Nan's family was no different. Her father was drafted into the army, leaving behind a pregnant wife and three young children. The climb to the top floor became a strain for Nan's mother, who then decided to move downstairs, to a ground level flat, which meant giving up the sunlight and fresh air of their top-floor home. In many ways this physical move from sunlight to darkness, is symbolic of what was yet to come. In the summer of 1941 Nan and her brother Tom were evacuated to Inverness-shire, along with twenty-five other children from the Abbeyhill district:

> *"It was very hard. You were only allowed to take a certain amount of stuff with you. You would be given a list of the things that you had to take - two pairs of trousers, two jumpers, two pair of socks, two pair of pyjamas... You were allowed one suitcase, with all the bits in it, and two toys - that was it"*

However, another traumatic event soon overshadowed the evacuation ordeal, when in December 1941, Nan's mother died, in Edinburgh, during childbirth:

> *"I remember the finality of it all. The fact that, that was it, there was nobody. We were all alone, and so far away. I didn't know what was going to happen to us. I felt that I had this responsibility for my brother, Tommy. I had been told by my Mum, when we were getting evacuated, to look after him... That's the last view I have of my mother, standing on the station, with my little brother Kenny in her arms, waving and crying. 'Look after your wee brother' - those were the last words she said to me"*

From this poignant, key moment onwards, Nan became the 'custodian' of what remained of her family, as well as a guardian to the memory of what they had lost.

According to Daniel & Thompson (1996) the act of taking responsibility for others is characteristically part of women's socialisation and therefore undertaking such a task in childhood, although extreme, is likely to correspond with normalised expectations and an on-going sense of identity. This may well have been the case for Nan, considering that her 'custodian responsibilities' (to keep both, her family and the memory of their life before the war) grew considerably over time. Nan's father eventually returned to the UK and arranged for his children to be put in a Home for widowers' children, where Nan and her brothers spent the next four years of their lives. The harsh memories of those years, of that Home, still haunt Nan to this day:

> *"As soon as Daddy left, our suitcases were taken away. You never saw your own clothes again. You were given a number. You had your dignity taken away. I had quite long hair and you even had that taken away from you. Your hair was cut off as soon as you got there...From the time I was seven, I had nothing. Everything was left behind. You didn't have anything and you didn't have anyone. No one really cared"*

In many ways, the orphanage was also a kind of a 'Wee World'. A carefully monitored and controlled closed-system, where fear and blackmail were used as a means of manipulation:

> *"I wrote my father a letter saying 'Please Daddy, come and take us away from here'. And of course all the letters that went out were read, and all the letters and parcels that came in were opened. So Matron sent for me, I was scared to death of her. She said - 'If I send this letter to your Daddy and he reads it, he would think that you're not happy here and that would make him unhappy. You wouldn't want your Daddy to be unhappy, would you?. I think it would be a good idea if you went away and wrote again to tell him you're getting on fine and then I can post it for you'"*

What started as a temporarily uprooted childhood soon became a permanently lost one. A time and place Nan could dream of, long for, depict and portray, but never again go back to. All she had left were memories, and an extraordinary ability to narrate and convey them.

Sensory Journeys

Memoirs are generally linked in academic literature with autobiographical narration. Storytelling, and in particular the story we tell of ourselves, is often viewed as a fundamental element of human existence, deeply embedded in our psyche as a species, who Myerhoff (1978) defines as *Homo Narrans - The Storyteller*. Autobiographical narration is therefore perceived as a core means of constructing, developing and maintaining a sense of identity, woven out of memories and experience (see Myerhoff, 1978, 1992; and Haight & Webster, 1995). The process of recollecting and recounting our past, and in particular our childhood years, is consequently seen as an important agency in linking past, present and future, enabling us to order and reflect upon our experiences, as well as resolve certain conflicts and key events in our past (cf. Conway, 1990; Rubin, 1989, 1995). Autobiographical narration is also regarded as an important means of defining and articulating our notion of society and history, as it often includes social and historical data about people and events that goes beyond the subjective experience of the narrator (cf. Gullestad, 1996; Samuel, 1996, 1999; Sheridan, 2000).

However, the articulation of history and memory is seldom limited to an entirely abstract, linguistic representation, even in its most formal, 'Westernised' manifestation. The combined use of a visual medium alongside a textual, or oral medium, has generally been regarded as crucial for the precision of the conveyed message, in terms of both, the actuality of the recorded event or persona, and the influence they would have on later generations (cf. Gombrich, 1984, 1994, 1995; and Haskell, 1995). By the same token the perception, preservation and presentation of personal histories and memories is by no means solely linguistic, given that our experience of the world, especially in early childhood, is primarily sensual, as Nan's case study demonstrates. The academic discourse on memory tends to focus exclusively on one aspect of its manifestation at a time, often ignoring the contribution and significance of other interrelated aspects, such as the emotional dimension of memory (see Conway, 1990; and Rubin, 1989, 1995), as well as what Merleau-Ponty (1962) has termed 'synaesthetic' - the fusion of all our senses into an overall bodily experience (see Abram, 1997).

Nan's narrated reminiscences of her early life experiences in Scotland are remarkably vivid and rich in detail, perhaps because she has very few authentic materials left from that time. Her articulation of the past could therefore be viewed and analysed with an exclusively oral focus, excluding its material, emotional and sensory expressions.

However, to do so would be to disregard the unique nature of Nan's recollection and her extraordinary recreation of her lost childhood world. The fusion of emotions and senses that accompany and support Nan's story, enables her to recapture and convey the *sense* and *essence* of her experience, making her memories more tangible for both her audience and herself.

Our sensory journey into Nan's past begins in the present, within the private museum of her home, which houses, voices and displays the symbolic roots and embodiments of her memoirs. The first and most obvious sensory element of Nan's narration is *sound*. As she recounts her childhood memories Nan's accent becomes more and more manifest, especially while recalling key conversations and verbal exchanges, where she skilfully mimics the voices and accents of different participants. Gradually her native Scottish lilt begins to dominate her intonation, while Scottish expressions, the jargon of her past, emerge to permeate her speech. Bahloul (1996) describes a similar experience with her multi-lingual, immigrant informants. "Although the principal language used in the narratives is French, because it is the language used every day by my Jewish hosts, Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic emerge at intervals in narratives, as languages of the past now abandoned. There is a narrative logic in the alternation of these languages - the code switching indicates a temporal shift. French is the language of the present (and of the future) Arabic that of the past" (Bahloul, 1996: 135).

The echoes of past-times and past practices are evident in Nan's oral narration as well, especially when she gives voice to her childhood play, singing the verses of various ball-game rhymes out loud:

"Right hand.
Left hand.
Touch your heel.
Touch your toe.
See you go..."

"Mary Queen of Scots got her head chopped off,
Her head chopped off, her head chopped off.
Mary Queen of Scots got her head chopped off,
On a cold and frosty morning..."

However, the most poignant sound in Nan's childhood story is the voice of her grief and anguish over her mother's death. As she reconstructs the events of that night, she begins to mimic her own voice as a child (as well as mimicking the intonations of other people that were present, like the matron's heavy Inverness shire accent) re-enacting, perhaps even reliving the harsh experience of her terrible loss:

> *"I remember being sent for, it was a cold, dark, winter's night, in December 1941. As soon as I walked into the pantry, where Matron was waiting for me, I knew it was something very bad. It was a long, narrow room and she sat at the end. And she said - 'Come on in lassie, come on in. Come and sit on my knee' - and she said - 'You know, your mammy's been ill'. And I started... I started... Ach... I'll never forget that night. 'You'll have to tell your wee brother' - she said. So they got my little brother, who was five, out of bed and they brought him to me. 'Tell Tommy' - they said and went away. Well, I couldn't tell him, for crying. I just couldn't get it out - 'Our mammy... Our mammy... Our mammy'. I can still see the look on his face now. He didn't know what I was talking about. He had forgotten her. It was six or seven months since we left home and he was only five years old and he had forgotten. And of course that made me want to bash him, because I got no reaction from him. He didn't cry, he just looked at me with his big blue eyes and sucked his cheeks in, like that..."*

This undoubtedly crucial moment in Nan's life was heightened by the fact that her young brother had forgotten their mother, or at least so it seemed at the time. Not only had she lost her mother and her secure past, it seemed as if she was the only one left to remember the lost world of their childhood home, the only one who could give it a voice and revive its image. This may well have been the trigger for Nan's phenomenally detailed memory and her deeply embedded need to narrate her story and recreate tangible presentations of her past.

The second, vital sensory element in Nan's reminiscence is ***sight***. In her attempt to portray and preserve her vanished 'Wee World', Nan is forever searching for, as well as creating, visual representations of her geographical roots. She has numerous books on Scottish history and geography, as well as books about Edinburgh, which often include maps and illustrations of the city throughout the ages, not to mention Billy Hunter's recent book on the 'Wee World', which she cherishes.

Nan also collects old postcards of Edinburgh in bygone days, and is always on the lookout for old aerial photos of the city, especially those that include views of her local district of Abbeyhill. One of Nan's most prized possessions is an old family album, full of photographs that her aunt had taken in the 1920s and 1930s:

> *"Before Auntie Nan died she showed me her album. I had never seen it before. She said - 'You might like to have this'. And I was absolutely amazed when I looked at it. It was incredible! She had such an eye... So I ended up with lots of family photographs"*

Nan has her own, substantial photo collection as well. Comprised mainly of landscapes, townscapes and old houses, it includes photos of the 'Home for Widowers' Children', which she had gone back to visit as an adult. However, the one cityscape she truly longs for, but cannot revisit and capture with her camera, is her first childhood home in Edinburgh. The 'Wee World' of Abbeyhill as Nan knew it, no longer exists. The old - *'Dr Begg's Buildings'* have long been demolished, along with the public washhouse, the dance hall, the Regent cinema and other familiar landmarks of Nan's early childhood. The only way she could preserve an image of her lost childhood world was to create it herself, and so she did, with great care and precision.

Nan's comprehensive mapping of the Abbeyhill district, as she remembers it in the 1930s [see Figure 4.1], along with the meticulous layout of their 'stair' in the *Begg's Buildings* [see Figure 4.2] and the richly detailed drawing of her family's tenement flat [see Figure 4.3], as well as several books and photos, accompanied all of our sessions as graphic references to her story.

Linking her narratives with visual illustrations enables Nan to virtually recreate her childhood landscapes, thereby appropriating and legitimising her claim of belonging to this bygone locality (cf. Kuchler, 1993; and Bender, 1993). Through the carefully drawn map and floor-plans, which show the layout of the tenement building, Nan can revive her 'Wee World', complementing her story with meaningful visual images of the landmarks and boundaries of her childhood's domestic space, all of which help frame and affirm her early experiences. However, it is the drawing of the family's home that plays the most vital role, as every detail in Nan's drawing is linked with memories, stories and family practices. Thus, the memory of the home becomes in turn a home for the memories associated with it:

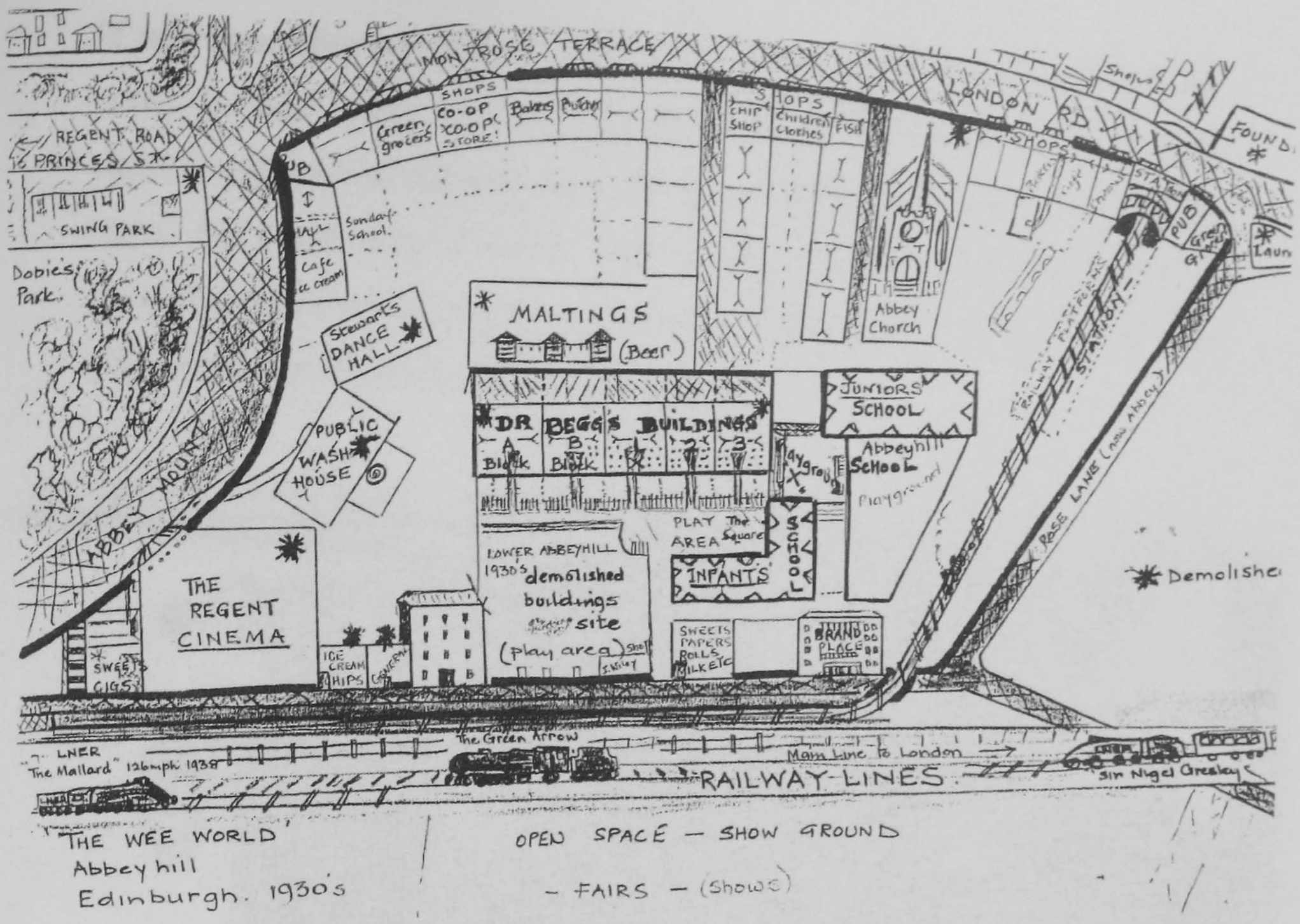

Figure 4.1: Map of Abbeyhill - Nan's Wee World (1930s)

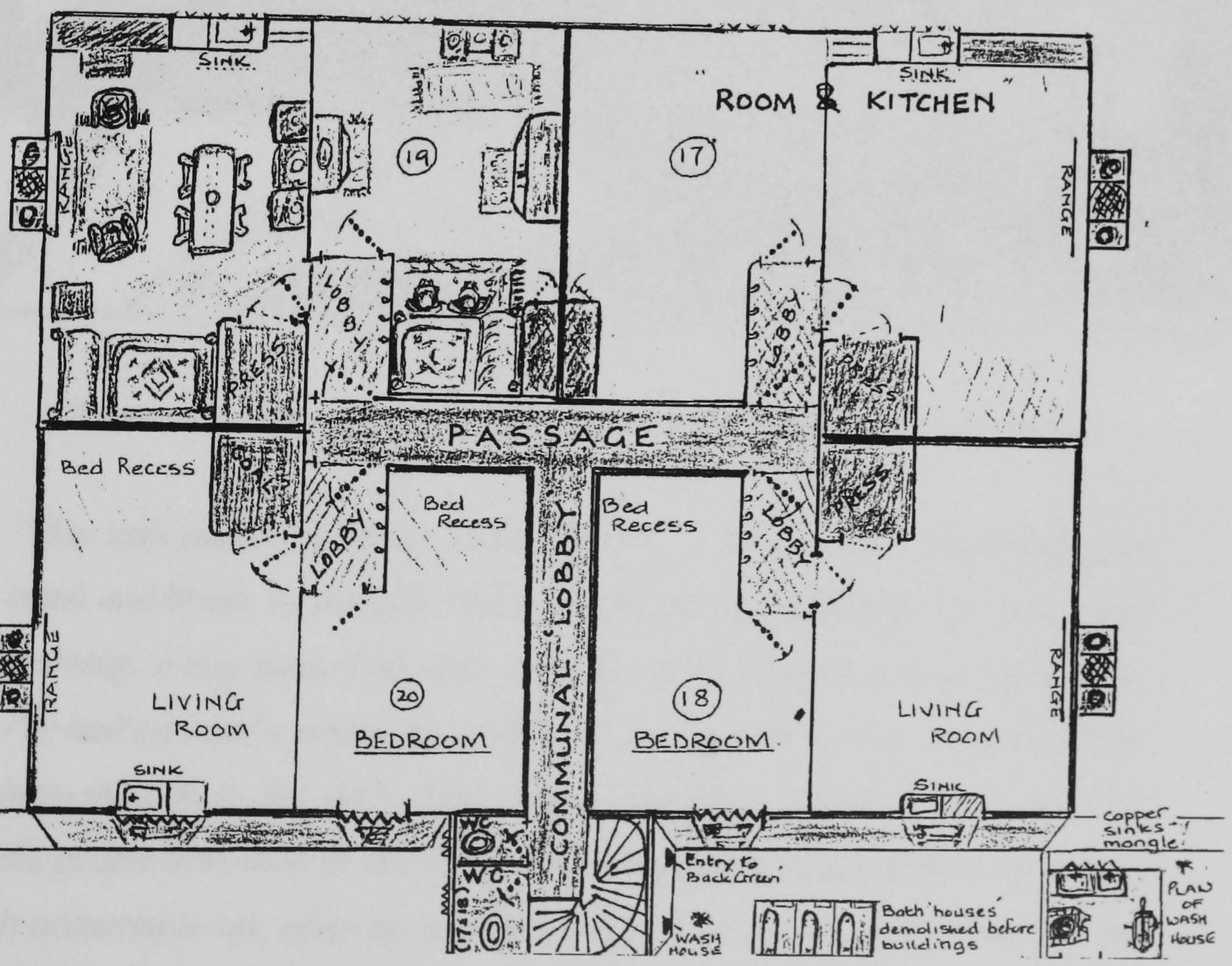

Figure 4.2: Begg's Building Layout - Nan's Childhood Home (1930s)

"I can remember my brother Tom's first steps. He learnt to walk in that room. He was sitting on that storage shelf over there, and it was just the right height for him to kinda slide his bottom off and make his first tottering steps. And I was there to see it! And I'll never forget it... The wireless was my dad's. He loved the wireless! We used to listen to it together. That's what started my love of music, that and the pictures"

Figure 4.3: Kitchen / Living Room in Nan's Childhood Home (1930s)

"That little mirror there has a little shelf on it. That's where you'd keep your comb and brush, by the sink where you'd wash up and brush your hair every morning. Every home had such a mirror by the kitchen sink in those days. I've had my aunt's mirror for a while. It was very dear to me because it had been there from the early 1900s and it 'saw' and 'reflected' the lives of all the people who lived in that house - my grandparents, my mother, my aunt... It occurred to me, after my aunt died that it was the end of the line, the end of an era. My aunt was the last one. There was nothing left to reflect... I eventually gave it to a local history museum in Edinburgh. Their researcher was looking for one and I knew she'd take good care of it"

Giving away her aunt's mirror was by no means easy for Nan. However, the fact that it is on display in a *local* museum, presenting a *local* past, *her past*, enables her to maintain, as well as share her personal link to her family's history and her childhood days. Nan's involvement with local history museums, in both Edinburgh and Croydon, is a further means of preserving and presenting the narratives and materials of her past. This not only legitimises her reminiscences, but also encourages her creative expressiveness.

Nan had loaned several 1950s items to the *Lifetimes* museum as well, and was asked if she could recall the furniture and the décor she had during that period and perhaps make a few drawings that they could include in the computer touch-screen display. This led to a series of comprehensive sketches of Nan and John's first home together after they were married, such as the sunlit kitchen [Figure 4.4] and the extremely detailed, water colour painting of their living room [Figure 4.5].

Figure 4.4: Kitchen in Nan's First Home as an adult (1950s)

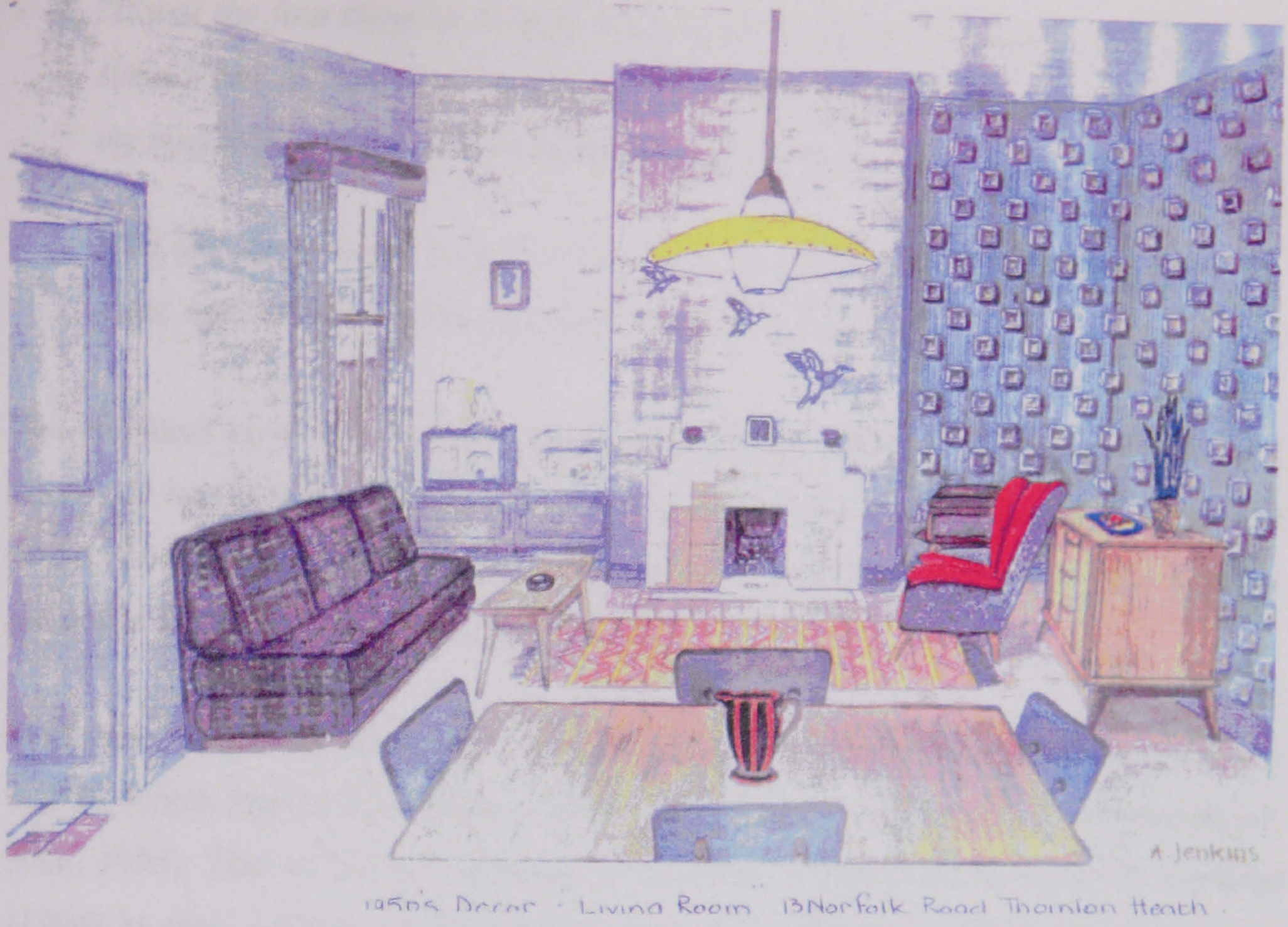

Figure 4.5: Living Room in Nan's First Home as an adult (1950s)

Nan's vivid recollections are an outcome of everyday, bodily experience of household chores, manifested in acts of cleaning and polishing, as well as in the act of decoration:

> *"They asked me how I remember it all in such detail. Well, I've cleaned it all every week, didn't I. And I still have quite a few items of furniture, in use, to this day. I've got the sideboard and the studio couch. They were very fashionable in the 50s... It was black with little bits of red and yellow on it that went well with the cherry red armchair, and the mid brown furniture, and the rug in front of the fire had a red, yellow and white zigzag pattern..."*

"The only thing I collect is memories"

The third sensory aspect of Nan's memoirs is *touch*. Nan has quite literally surrounded herself with tangible representations of the past. She has an impressive range of 1940s and 1950s materials, including sets of clothes, hats, handkerchiefs, make-up cases, perfume bottles, hair-nets and hair-pins, plastic necklaces and various knick-knacks, children's books (especially nursery rhymes), as well as songbooks and vinyl records (mainly of musicals and movie scores), several periodical magazines, stamps, coins, ceramic artefacts and a 1950s bedroom suite, which is still in use today.

"It was the first thing we bought after we got married. It's quality furniture. I'm not one for throwing out things that are in prime condition, and most of my stuff is in prime condition because it gets polished every other week"

"If I like something I keep it. I'd be sorry to see it go. I'd be thinking, if it went, would other people look after it the same way I did?"

The emphasis upon 'caring' for a cherished object, in terms of the investment of time, effort and care (see Drazin, 2001) can be seen as part of an overall notion of 'saving' the object from decay and 'extinction', especially if it is an old, or rare item that has particular sentimental value for the owner.

Collectors frequently view themselves as 'saviours' of lost objects and disappearing worlds, which legitimises the time, effort and money they invest in their collection (cf. Belk, 1995). This notion of 'collecting as salvation' is illustrated by Elsner & Cardinal (1994) in their analysis of the biblical myth of Noah's Ark - "Here is saving in its strongest sense, conscious rescuing from extinction. In the myth of Noah as ur-collector resonate all the themes of collecting itself: desire and nostalgia, saving and loss, the urge to erect a permanent and complete system against the destructiveness of time" (1994: 1). Nan has a few older artefacts in her collection, which she regards as family heirlooms that she had salvaged:

"That was my grandmother's jelly pan up there, it's brass. My grandmother used it to make jam, then Auntie Nan used it to make jam. There's two more pots along there, that belonged to my grandmother, the jam pot and butter pot... The letterbox there was Auntie Nan's. She probably bought it back in the 1920s when they first came out"

In her historical analysis of women in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, Vickery (1993) demonstrates how household artefacts were used to create a world of meaning and transmit a personal history. Collections tend to create meaning and metaphor in much the same way, as they often centre upon a particular theme that is in some way symbolic of the collector, be it his occupation or appearance, family history or life experiences, or even his fantasies. The collection then serves as an extension of the self, a visual representation of the collector that reflects individual perceptions and values (cf. Stewart, 1994; and Belk, 1994).

A collection can also act as a means of symbolic self-completion, especially at times of bereavement - "Freud started his collection of antiquities shortly after his father's death... The acquisition of these artistic and archaeological objects was almost explicitly in response to his loss, since he found them to be "a source of exceptional renewal and comfort". [It was also] bound up with his work. Freud's desire to be an "archaeologist of the mind" was a long standing feature of his inner life" (Forrester, 1994, in: Elsner & Cardinal, 1994: 226-233). Nan's extensive book collection is one of her principal means of symbolic self-completion. The collection comprises a small proportion of fiction (mainly poetry), whilst the majority of the books are non-fiction, covering a wide range of topics from history and photography, to art, handicrafts, and cookery. While these represent Nan's wide-ranging variety of interests, they also symbolise the most significant people in her life: her aunt, who was a keen photographer; her mother, who was a 'brilliant cook'; and most importantly, her father, who was her hero:

> *"My father was a learned man, a self-educated man. He was very keen on books... He spoke fluent Esperanto and corresponded with people all over the world. And he was a writer, a bit of a poet. He worked as a uniformed caretaker at a very prestigious library, in Parliament Square. He was my hero for a long, long time, until I got a bit older and he re-married and we came down here and he changed"*

Collecting is, first and foremost an act of creative production, an experience of play with classification and aesthetics (cf. Danet & Katriel, 1994; Stewart, 1994). One of Nan's most playful and intriguing collections is her assembled *families* of green glass bottles, which she started amassing almost unintentionally:

> *We had a big party one night and of course everyone brought a bottle... So later on, when we were clearing up, after the all the guests had gone, I noticed all these empty green glass bottles that were left behind. They were all different shapes and sizes and they all had that lovely green colour. John wanted to throw them away, but I didn't let him. I said - 'Look, they make little families. Here's a tall thin father and his short, stubby wife. And here are their children'. John thinks I'm mad, but I think they're lovely. So now all our friends give us their empty green glass bottles. And I clean them up and sort them into little families.*

Nan's bottle collection enables her not only to form symbolic 'whole families', but also analogously recreate the networks of relationships that she had lost. Furthermore, through this direct use of objects she is able to generate the same kind of imaginative, resourceful, 'make do' play, she had practised as a child. Another means of 'resurrection' and compensation for her lost childhood is a small collection of old-fashioned, mostly hand-made, dolls (some of which she has made herself):

> *"I had a doll once, a lovely doll, whose name was Stella. Auntie Nan bought it for me... But then the war came and you were only allowed to take two items with you. So I took my doll. After my mother died, I left the doll with Auntie Nan and she kept it for me"*

Nan's extraordinary collection of special stones and unusual pieces of wood, is another playful, imaginative collection that is both aesthetically pleasing and symbolically gratifying. The pieces of wood have a special significance for Nan, seeing that they have been 'uprooted', just like her, and yet managed to maintain their unique 'character' or 'persona' (at least in Nan's eyes). Trees are often used as a symbol of growing, living links with mother earth, with the ground upon which they have grown, a theme that frequently emerges in Nan's narration:

> *"My roots are on the ground that Edinburgh is built on. It will always be. Always. When I go up there I have to get my feet on the ground, I have to walk up to the park..."*

By the same token, the stones can be viewed as tangible, permanent, unchangeable, an everlasting testimony of the past. One of Nan's 'concrete treasures' is literally a piece of concrete. She visited the Regent cinema site after the building was demolished and picked up a piece of concrete - 'a piece of the Regent', which she keeps as a very tangible souvenir of her vanished, demolished world. Like many of the other materials Nan has collected through the years, this too is an object of memory, an imaginary 'bridge' to the past:

> *"I lost everything at a very young age. I lost my family, as far as parents are concerned. I lost my home, my childhood, my whole world. So I clung, I virtually clung to whatever was left of it. Maybe that's why I have all these things..."*

These 'things', as Nan refers to them, framed and fuelled our conversations, leading our shared exploration of the past. For each item in Nan's private museum is linked to countless stories, from the story of its purchase, to the past-times stories it evokes. "You're quite a collector" I remarked, as we looked at Nan's wide-ranging array of vinyl records. 'Not really' She replied. "The only thing I collect is memories".

The final sensory elements in Nan's recollection, *tastes* and *smells*, are often linked to domestic spaces and practices, such as the preparation of food (see Seremetakis, 1994 [5]; Petridou, 2001; and Sutton 2001). This was particularly manifest in our life-history sessions, as Nan was constantly preparing and serving food to either John or myself:

> *"The smell of Sunday morning's breakfast - that was family, all round the table in the morning. I remember the smell of the bacon and especially the smell of the freshly baked rolls... You could smell when they brought the rolls in, because they were still fresh. It's that smell I remember most"*

Looking out at the garden, the sights and smells evoke another memory, one of lilacs in bloom and the harsher realities of life in the orphanage:

> *"We had absolutely nothing on the estate, but we had a nice teacher. And I don't know what possessed us, but we decided to go and pick some lilacs for [her]. The place was awash with lilacs in spring, but we were banned you see, we weren't allowed in that area... So this girl and I went into a forbidden part and blow me! Along the path...was Matron! And she spotted us standing there, with three twigs of lilac in our hand - 'Get inside, now!'... Down in the dining room there were long tables and benches - 'Bend over'"*

The Custodian

In recent years Nan has been involved with various 'reminiscing sessions' (mainly for schools, local clubs, and *Lifetimes*) some of which centre around memory and smell:

> *"I have a table, covered with all sorts of smelly things and the people have to come up and have a sniff and guess what they're smelling. It might be a smell from long ago, like a pink healing ointment, or Zambuck...*

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[5] *Seremetakis's account (1994) of her research in rural and urban Greece places a similar emphasis on the sensory experience of memories and material history.*

And then I take out my special parcel. Weeks beforehand, when I know I am going to do it, I get brown paper bags and I put a few apples inside. You see, we used to get parcels from home. My mother might send a jumper or some mittens... but the thing that sticks in my mind most, are the apples. There would be an apple for Tommy and an apple for me, and it was just that smell when you opened the parcel - amazing! So in the pack that I do for the reminiscing sessions, or for when I talk to schools, I have a parcel, wrapped up in the same way that my mother would have wrapped it, with the address and a stamp from the 1940s, sealed with red sealing wax (because my mother would have sealed it with red sealing wax) with the string and all..."

Such symbolic representations of a beloved deceased are frequently expressed in works of art and literature. "A successful outcome of mourning often results in a work that may itself stand as a memorial... James Barrie's *Peter Pan* preserved the image of Barrie's 'lost' brother (who died in childhood) while yielding him up to never-never land" (Klass, 1996: 114).

Nan's reminiscence sessions have a similar quality. Reviving her mother's parcel, which signifies love and care, is an act of remembrance through creation, which symbolically revives both the memory of her mother and the story of her lost childhood.

"I always start the session with this quote from Helen Keller -

'Smell is a potent wizard that transports us across thousands of miles and all the years that we have lived. The odours of fruits waft me to my southern home, to my childhood frolics in the peach orchard. Other odours instantaneous and fleeting cause my heart to dilate joyously or contract with remembered grief. Even as I think of smells, my nose is full of scents that start to awake sweet memories of summers gone and ripening fields far away'

Isn't that lovely? So I start with that and I tell them that everybody has a story. Everybody that has a life has a story"

Alongside her *Memory & Smell* reminiscing sessions, Nan creates and conducts several, object and story oriented sessions that focus on a particular historical era; namely the - 1930s, World War II and the 1950s. Sharing the sensory and material embodiments of her life memoirs with others enhances Nan's self-definition, as well as her sense of purpose, responsibility and commitment, as both collector and storyteller of past-times:

> *"I did a talk to a school up the road. The teacher asked me to talk to the children about evacuation and what it was like. So I took all my bits up with me - a gas mask box, a few toys and things that we use to play with, ropes and all that. And I made a pixie hat for them to put on and I took a doll along, and I took an old suitcase with a label to put on it, and I told them the story of what happened during the evacuation... One of the little girls broke down and cried and I went - 'Oh, I'm so sorry'. I didn't want to upset them, but on the other hand, how can they realise what other children have to suffer elsewhere when they are taken away from their home?"*

Being the guardian of her family history, combined with her more 'public persona' as a reminisces narrator, Nan has an almost 'custodial duty' to create, or rather re-create, an 'inheritance' of tangible memories, an articulation of the past for future generations:

> *"I've been scribbling things down for years and it came to me that it would be nice to do a few drawings to go with my stories, because all that's gone now, it's all been demolished... Just to give an idea of what it was like... It's for my grandchildren mainly. They're still young, but someday, when they're a bit older, if they're interested, I think it will be nice for them to have the drawings so they can see what it was like"*

Nan's private museum of memory, as well as her public, evocative reminiscing sessions enable her to channel her bereavement and personal grief into a positive, creative act of remembrance. By doing so Nan generates a memorial-like tribute (see Rowlands, 1999), where the importance of her personal loss is acknowledge, remembered, and embodied in a more collective notion of history, memory and commemoration. Creating symbolic memorials and tangible inheritances serves a further, fundamental purpose that is closely linked to Nan's age and life cycle stage (cf. Myerhoff, 1978, 1992; Marcoux, 2001). 'Ordering' her life-long memoirs and various possessions enables Nan to complete the circle of her reminiscence journey, binding past, present and future.

Full Circle

Our 'journey' ends where it began, in Nan's private history museum of symbolic roots - her home:

> *"They say a home reflects the interests of its owner, I think mine asks 'where does your interest stop?!' [Laughs] But I'm surrounded by all the things I love - the books, the photos, the dolls, all my favourite knick-knacks, the Scottish stuff, the tartan boxes, the bottles..."*

Nan's notion of 'feeling at home' is strongly linked with being physically surrounded by her cherished possessions. If objects play a similar role in our unconsciousness, as language does in our consciousness (see Miller, 1987) then Nan's complementary use of narratives, materials and sensory manifestations, clearly articulates her life story on more than just a cognitive level. By 'housing' the material and sensory evocations of her narrated memories, Nan symbolically revives the past homes she had left behind - from the first home she and John shared as newlyweds, to her childhood home, her true place of origin and belonging.

Through a remarkable attention to detail in all her articulations (be it richly comprehensive stories, maps, drawings, or 're-created' objects), as well as a meticulous sense of décor, Nan is able to capture and re-stage the comfortable, cosy atmosphere of her original domestic space, the *sense* and *essence* of her childhood home. The drawing of her 1950s kitchen [see Figure 4.4] emphasises the rays of sunlight shining through the windows and doors, thereby echoing both the narrated description and the sketched depiction of her bright, warm, sunlit childhood home [see Figure 4.3].

Nan has decorated her current living room [see Figure 4.6] in a way that regenerates the warmth and closeness of her family's home, as if creating a 'life-size depiction', or a 'lived-in set' that enables her to re-enter her childhood's dwelling experience:

> *"I wanted the room to have a kind of 'back in time' feel to it, so I decided to have these wooden bookcases and the matching wooden frame for the fireplace..."*

Figure 4.6: Living Room in Nan's Current Home (2000)

The room certainly has a 'past-time' character, with its lace covered, bottle-green settees and quilted pillows, as well as the old-fashioned family photos. The dark-red wall paper and its cream coloured leaf design creates a sensation of warm enclosure, while the various books, ornaments and period curiosities add to the *'Aladdin's Cave'* of reminiscence impression.

Throughout the house there are numerous 'corners of reminiscences' displaying a range of small scale collections, assembled together under a certain historical or aesthetic theme:

> *"I like things that are typical of a certain era, or a specific style. It's not anything in particular, it's just something that catches my eye, because of its shape, or colour, or the memory it brings up"*

One such 'reminiscences corner' can be found on a small white dresser in the spare bedroom upstairs [see Figure 4.7]. Like many other of Nan's collection-displays, this little compilation encompasses an array of memory-objects and family photos, commemorating significant people, places and periods in Nan's life. It includes

jewellery boxes, pin cushions and a potpourri container, all of which were purchased by Nan in car-booth sales, because they resemble similar items that her grandmother had. There are also various 1950s 'whimsies' that Nan had collected at the time; and different flower-motif ornaments, most of which she has received as gifts from the school children she has worked with over the years. With its symmetrical presentation and flowery theme (with an emphasis on roses, which are also the subject of one of her father's poems) Nan's dresser-display seems like a 'memory shrine', a memorial to an array of memories, from different bygone times.

Figure 4.7: Bedroom Dresser In Nan's Current Home (2000)

The particularity of these assembled objects, alongside the meticulous recreation of period décor in various rooms in Nan's current and previous homes, create a clear testament of material history. Her visual and oral depiction of her first home as a married woman in the 1950s, as well as her family home in the 1930s, construct a picture of a 'classic' home, an Everyman's home of the respective era:

> *"One part of the chimney was covered with a lime green background with a fine black strip on top. Superimposed on that were these small, mock picture*

frames, they were painted to look three dimensional, inside each of the frames there was a little painting of pears and plums... It was a bit dazzling, but it was outlandish 1950s!"

Once again, the uniqueness of Nan's depiction, be it oral, visual, or otherwise tangible, lies in its seemingly ordinariness. The typical homes that are illustrated in Nan's articulations of her personal past become material testimonies of *'the past'*, just as her narrated life story embodies, at least to some extent, the history of her generation. The objects and drawings, along with the stories they accompany become greater than themselves, as their representation goes beyond Nan's autobiography to portray an 'everyday' of a generation, of an era in British culture. In this sense, Nan's home becomes a kind of local history museum, while Nan herself becomes an ancestral figure, charged with preserving and presenting not only her personal history, locality and identity, but also a collective sense of - *past*, *place* and *people* - a remembrance that is simultaneously both private and communal.

Conclusion

"Museums are more than cultural institutions and showplaces of accumulated objects: they are the sites of interaction between personal and collective identities, between memory and history, between information and knowledge production..."

(Crane, 2000: 12)

The purpose of this section has been to shift the focus of discussion back to local history and heritage displays. Proposing a much-expanded view of local history museums as a figurative meeting point of 'past', 'place' and 'people', the core modules have jointly explored local people's perception, discourse, practice and overall experience of history, locality and community, demonstrating the interconnections between these mediums and a sense of identity and belonging.

The first module examined people's perception of 'history', 'heritage' and 'the past' - in general, and Croydon's history and heritage in particular. The overall findings indicate that most people attach *some* value to knowing about the past, and show some degree of interest in actively doing so. The 'forms' and 'levels' of history that my informants were interested in (be it personal, familial, communal, local, national or

international), as well as the ways they choose to access, explore, absorb and appropriate that history, varied in accordance with age, ethnicity, education, occupation and overall socio-economic status.

There seemed to be a prevalent trend to highlight certain historical events, such as great wars (mainly World War II) and great achievements (especially NASA's moon landing), along with important Royal events, and life events, such weddings, births and funerals, as well as other, ceremonial events, like Coronations, or Graduations, respectively. The dramatic nature of these events and their extraordinariness, makes them stand out in people's recollection, as a kind of personal, communal, or national 'threshold events'. The interest in Royal events emerged as almost distinct from other historical events, as it was frequently linked to a more personal sense of past, and to a notion of national 'heritage', rather than national 'history' *per se*. This then highlighted the importance of exploring how (and whether) my informants distinguish between these two, closely related, mediums.

The ethnographic data emerging from this study categorically endorses Merriman's (1991) core argument - that the public is not a passive homogeneous-mass, manipulated by misleading, ideological presentations, or 'hypnotised' by nostalgic images of the past. While most of my informants expressed an overall enjoyment of, and preference for heritage displays (which were commonly viewed as more personal, more contemporary and altogether more accessible), they were critical in their viewing of such presentations, comparing them to their own knowledge, values and beliefs. As a result, the voiced 'imagining' of the past was usually neither romantic, nor nostalgic. Nevertheless, nostalgia was still an important part of people's discourse, although it was more commonly manifested on a personal scale, rather than a national one - as a personal nostalgia for a personal - *past*, *place* and *people*, and, perhaps more crucially a personal sense of localised identity and belonging - to a *past*, *place* and *people*.

The second module therefore explored local people's perception and practice of 'place' in general, and of Croydon in particular. The review addressed Croydon's complexities of 'place' and 'space', including both the meaningful places within the borough, and the meaningless 'non-place' that, for many residents, is the borough. Highlighting the local manifestations of the 'Croydon experience' from its residents' diverse points of view, the analysis examined the means of creating and maintaining this, longed for, sense of locality, community and belonging.

Familiarity was revealed as an important issue affecting people's perception of Croydon. This was especially evident with the staff members I interviewed (most of whom were not residents of Croydon prior to joining the *Clocktower* centre) and in particular the museum professionals, who were directly involved with researching and presenting Croydon's - *past*, *place* and *people*. The more involved they became with Croydon - *physically* travelling around the borough, interviewing people and collecting materials for the museum - the fonder they grew of it. This then reinforces the significance of practice to the process in which perception and attachment are constructed.

Croydon's real division emerged as being, not so much its demographic 'North/South' division, but rather a 'Core/Perimeter' divide, separating the centre of the borough from its surrounding neighbourhoods, with *'Central Croydoners'* expressing an altogether more positive view of Croydon. Nevertheless, an evocative notion of a *'community lost'* still prevails, heightening the 'need' and longing for a sense of localism and belonging.

The final module centred upon a detailed, ethnographic account of such a 'longing' and its material and sensory manifestations. The review established the corresponding roles of material culture and oral narratives in personal reminiscences, thereby demonstrating their significance in the practice of history and remembrance, within a specific domestic context. Nan's narrated memoirs and 'memory collections' created a sensory journey from the home of her childhood past to the home of her adult present, which acts as a private 'local history museum' - preserving and presenting not only a personal history, locality and identity, but also a collective sense of *past*, *place* and *people*.

The following, concluding section, assembles the various themes of the thesis, summarising the core findings and key contributions, along with the principal conclusions and overall implications of this study. This then leads to two final analysis models, illustrating the new perception of local history museums and their consumption presented in this study, and demonstrating how the correlation between an individual's personal identity and the museum's presentation can indicate the extent of their interest in the museum, and its consequent consumption.

Section Five

Summary & Conclusion

Principal Objectives
And Methodological Approach

Anthropological debate on contemporary, western museums customarily centres upon a critique of cultural reproduction and representation. This is exemplified by the work of Katriel (1997) on Israeli settlement museums (which are perceived as *national* history museums) and the representation, articulation and negotiation of - *contested histories*; as well as by Clifford's (1999) reflection on museums as *'contact zones'*, as sites of cultural representation and exchange; and by Handler & Gable's (1997) ethnographic critique of Colonial Williamsburg, as the embodiment of heritage-site representations of a *politicised history*. The principal flaw in these studies lies in their almost-exclusive focus on cultural reproduction, at the expense of a more in-depth investigation of cultural consumption and the visitors' experience. Bagnall's (1996) study of heritage-site consumption and Macdonald's wide-ranging analyses of the London Science Museum (1992, 1993, 2002a) provide innovative advances to the typical research carried out by both Museum-Ethnography and visitor studies. However, while these notable bodies of work address issues of consumption, they do not consider the particular case study of local history museums. The study presented here attempts to fill this lacuna.

The core objective of this study has been to produce a detailed, analytical, ethnographic account of a local history museum and its consumption, from the diverse perspectives of its producers and, especially, its consumers. The analysis has therefore focused on people's discourse, practice and overall experience of museums and museum visiting - in general, and Croydon's local history museum in particular, with the aim of attaining a more profound, nuanced understanding of the museum consumption phenomenon, and its role within contemporary education, recreation and consumption cultures. Proposing a much-expanded view of local history museums as a figurative meeting point of - *museum*, *past*, *place* and *people*, the study also explored people's discourse, practice and overall experience of history, locality and community, and their profound relation to a sense of identity and belonging.

The principal premise of this study has therefore been that the consumption of museums in general, and local history museums in particular, is a complex, multifaceted act, which calls for an extensive, contextual, in-depth analysis of its various components.

Applying an ethnographic approach (see Miller, 1997) together with an eclectic array of complementary, qualitative and quantitative, interdisciplinary methods, enabled a broad exploration of contemporary museum culture. Choosing *Lifetimes*, Croydon's innovative local history museum, as a fieldwork focus provided not only a rich and multi-faceted case study, but also a vital 'point of entry' from which to access and study the field. *Lifetimes* became a focal point for data collection and comparisons, as well as a core means for encountering, establishing and expanding potential long-term contacts.

Underlying the specific complexities of this study were two fundamental challenges: first, the lack of a traditional 'studied other', which enhanced the necessity of devising means to 'de-familiarise the familiar'; second, and perhaps most crucial, the temporality of museum visiting, which emphasised the need to establish ongoing contacts with potential informants and generate frequent, casual meetings and conversations over an extended period of time.

Following Wolcott's definitions of both ethnography (1995) and participant observation (1999) the fieldwork entailed - 'experiencing, enquiring and examining' (1999: 45-47). That is to say, personal experiences, observations, conversations and various forms of interviewing, alongside the collection and analysis of secondary data (both qualitative and quantitative) have been the combined 'building blocks' of the research, in terms of process, practice and consequent experience. The multiple methodologies applied in this study jointly explored three cultural categories - *discourse*, *practice*, and *experience*.

According to Bourdieu (1977) comparing what people say with what they do provides a useful means of examining the social role and significance of the studied phenomenon. The study presented here took this notion further by comparing not only what people say with what they do, but also what they do not say (or say reluctantly), and do not do (or do reluctantly).

The following review centres upon the various research strategies employed to explore contemporary museum consumption. Although in practice many of the methods were used simultaneously, they are documented here under the three separate categories of - 'studying discourse' (what people say, or say reluctantly); 'studying practice' (what people do, or do reluctantly); and 'studying the experience', which epitomises the essence of ethnography.

The first category - studying museum consumption discourse - incorporated a visitors' survey (establishing a preliminary museum visitor profile and making initial contacts) alongside monthly activity diaries and various interviews with long-term informants.

Ultimately, long-term contacts were established with eighteen 'visitor' households and fifteen 'staff' informants (see Appendix 5). While, the selected 'visitor' households represented a variety of socio-economic and demographic characteristics, not every group was equally represented (for example, young adults, aged between sixteen and twenty-five were underrepresented in this study, as were people from opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum - the most and least affluent). The comparative analysis between the voiced perceptions and observed practices of different informants, and in particular, the comparisons between 'visitor' and 'staff' informants proved extremely useful in expanding and deepening the examination of the studied phenomena.

Ongoing contact with informants usually comprised an introductory session, followed by a series of semi-structured interviews (cf. Bernard, 1994; Steinar, 1996) and informal conversations, as well as a monthly activities diary, and a concluding life-history interview (see Gullestad, 1994, 1996; and Lieblich, 1997, 1998) [1].

Following Prince's (1982, 1983) work on 'leisure opportunities', along with Merriman's (1991) claim that museum visiting is part of a wider package of cultured activities, monthly 'activities diary' (see Appendix 2) were designed to provided an insight into informants' leisure choices and familial routines. More importantly, they revealed what the informants *perceived* as a leisure choice. However, the diaries' most significant function was to generate an 'excuse' for regular, frequent meetings with my informants, which aimed to compensate, at least to some degree, for the obvious lack of an intense 'shared dwelling' experience that is common in more traditional ethnographic studies.

Conducting these meetings within the context of the informant's home framed our contact within a more personal setting, and further enhanced the connections between certain objects (such as souvenirs, works of art, specific items of furniture, and even the décor itself) and certain memories. This was particularly instrumental during the final session, which centred on the extended life-history interview (see Appendix 3).

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[1] *For* ***Informants' Initial Interview*** *format;* ***Activities Diary*** *format; and* ***Final Interview & Life-History Review*** *format - see Appendices 1, 2 and 3 - receptively.*

Conversing with my informants, especially within the physical and psychological contexts of their home, proved to be an extremely revealing and rewarding fieldwork experience. These, increasingly informal, chats were a crucial factor in creating a sense of familiarity and trust, which seemed to put my informants at ease and allow them to express private views and attitudes, regardless of their social and cultural 'appropriateness', as well as share harrowing, traumatic life experiences, such as being bullied at school; being evacuated during the war; or, as in Nan's story, dealing with a great personal-loss. These candid accounts, along with people's life-story narratives, enabled a more contextual, nuanced understating of the *meaning* behind their expressed views and attitudes, as well as the origin of, and reason *why* a specific attitude exists. This demonstrates the merit of a synthesis approach - while other, quantitative methods (e.g. observations) offer a *description* of the studied phenomenon (*what* is happening) - a synthesis approach combining *psychological* and *socio-cultural* elements, within an ethnographic framework, allows for deeper questions regarding cause (*why* are things the way they are), indication and affect (what does it *mean*, what does it *reflect, and* what, who and how does it *influence*), thus producing a more in-depth analysis of the studied phenomenon, as advocated by Kelly (1982, 1983) and Merriman (1991, 2000).

The second category - studying museum consumption practice - entailed a series of extensive visitor observation sessions. The principal objectives were to produce an overall visitor profile, alongside a detailed visitor dynamics analysis. The sessions combined 'Space Syntax' techniques (see Vaughan, et al, 1997) with traditional 'fly-on-the-wall' style observations. Following the studies of Screven (1974; 1986; 1992), McManus (1987, 1988, 1989a, 1994), Hein (1998), and Falk & Dierking (1992; 2000) special emphasis was placed on visitor behaviour patterns and general 'code of conduct', as well as observed reactions and interaction, manifested in body language, facial expressions and overheard remarks. Visitors' preferences and attention spans, in terms of the overall length of the visit and the time spent at each display were also measured. A 'Snail Trail' method was simultaneously employed in order to track and record the visitor's 'museum route' around the gallery. However, the most intriguing material emerged from combining and correlating the quantitative data with the qualitative data, which enabled comparisons between distinctive 'layers of evidence' that frequently varied over time. These included the observed practices and expressed perceptions: during the visit to *Lifetimes*, immediately following the visit, and long after the visit - following an ongoing period of contact with the informant.

The third category - studying museum consumption experience - centred upon the school visit experience, seeing that school-groups form the largest and most common category of museum visiting, and that the educational role of museums is often perceived, by both museum professionals and the public, as the museum's main function (see Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2000: 2). However, the analysis presented here centred upon the experience, memory and enduring effect of school visits to museums, rather than on their educational merit.

Following the work of Bourdieu (1969; 1977; 1984) and Kelly (1982; 1983), which emphasis the importance of early socialisation, the exploration of people's school visit experiences integrated two areas of investigation: *present* experiences and their initial effects; and *past* experiences and their enduring effects. While the latter was achieved through interviews and informal conversations with adult informants, the former was accomplished through an extensive ethnographic study of two primary schools, from two contrasting localities: a relatively affluent suburb in South Croydon, and a far less affluent, urbanised area in North Croydon. Participant observation took the form of accompanying selected classes from both schools on museum visits, as an adult-helper. These participant observation sessions enabled me to empathise with my informants and appreciate *why* so many of them dreaded school-outings, particularly museum visits.

Employing Falk & Dierking's (1992) concept of interaction between the *personal*, *social* and *physical* contexts of museum visiting, the school visit was examined in terms of - expectations and preparations prior to the museum visit; reactions and interactions during the visit; and the overall impression and internalisation of the experience after the visit. Particular emphasis was placed upon the classroom practices that preceded and followed the visit - in terms of both didactic activities and 'civilising rituals'. Teachers' attitudes towards museum visiting and their consequent influence as a positive, or negative catalyst to the museum experience were also considered.

Core Findings

The following review charts the core findings emerging from this multi-layered study, commencing with the *Lifetimes* museum-experience, as perceived by both staff and visitors; proceeding to review local people's discourse, practice and experience of museums; then concluding with local people's perception of, and attitude towards -

history, locality and community. Jointly these findings produce a new way of viewing and critiquing the consumption of local history museums in general and the *Lifetimes* case study in particular.

The Lifetimes Experience

Lifetimes is by no means ordinary, or conventional. Visitors' initial reactions to the museum were typically that of surprise. This was reflected both physically - in their facial expression and slower walking pace as they entered the museum for the first time, as well as verbally - in their comments during and, especially, after the visit.

Visitors' attention spans, preferences and overall conduct changed in accordance with the composition of their visitor group, especially when accompanying young children. 'Crowd density' levels and the consequent ease of access to the various displays and interactive units, were also an influencing factor, as were other sensory elements, such as lighting, motion, sound and, especially, the opportunity to touch. These findings coincide with the results and recommendations presented in the works of Screven (1986); Shettel (1988); Miles (1998); Hein (1998); and Falk & Dierking (1992; 2000).

As evident from both body language and verbal communications, many visitors found the multimedia presentation and 'non-label' system somewhat baffling at first. However, once they overcame their initial confusion, most visitors were able to negotiate the presentation without much difficulty, using the interactive units as their principal means of information access. The quiz often became the preferred means of interaction with the display, to the exclusion at times, of other elements, such the 'electronic labels' or recorded memoirs.

When interviewed, immediately after their visit, an overwhelming majority of visitors stated that they were "pleasantly surprised" with the museum, which they often described as "different". Many commented on the museum's warm and welcoming atmosphere, as well as on the amount of materials on display, despite the limited space. However, during the course of fieldwork, new 'layers of evidence' began to emerge, which were often quite different from the preliminary results, in particular, visitors' lasting impression of *Lifetimes*, which varied considerably from their initial reaction, with comments frequently emphasising the museum's small and "cluttered" display area.

Such variance might be explained, as suggested by Macdonald (1993), by the tendency of most museum visitors to provide polite, abbreviated responses to survey and interview questions, as well as their typical reluctance to criticise the display. Nevertheless, there are two additional factors that influence this inconsistency - *time* and *perspective*. The visitors' initial reaction is an immediate *response* to the physical, emotional and intellectual impact of their museum experience, while their lasting impression is the *memory* of the museum experience and what they feel they have gained from it, which, for some visitors, seemed disappointingly little. The reason for this may well be linked to the issue of *perspective* - most adults visit the museum as part of a group, be it their family or their school. As such, their initial perception, experience and evaluation of *Lifetimes* is from the perspective of an accompanying-adult, which centres upon the *children's* experience and enjoyment, rather than their own. However, when asked to recall and re-evaluate their visit after a long period of time, the visitors refer not only to the children's experience, but also to their own museum experience, which was often 'non-existent', as they did not have the time, opportunity, or, primarily, the 'mind-set' to explore and experience the museum on their own accord.

A surprising finding in this regard was the correlation between the *visitors'* first impression of *Lifetimes* and the *staff's* first impression, prior to joining the museum team. Both groups expressed a sense of physical and mental 'clutter' and 'overloading', as well as a feeling of ambiguity and confusion as to how they were meant to engage with the museum's innovative display.

Equally fascinating were the distinct differences between the *staff* and the *visitors* in regard to their lasting perception of *Lifetimes'* presentation. The most fundamental of these concerned the issue of authenticity. While most visitors realised that the objects, stories and people on display at the museum were real, they seemed relatively indifferent to this quality. However, the staff's perception was very different, as the majority of them took pride in *Lifetimes*' 'authentic quality'. The reason for this discrepancy may well be that, the people presented in *Lifetimes* seem very 'real' to the staff, because they have had a real relationship with them, recording their life-stories, in the context of their homes. The visitors on the other hand, are only offered a 'snippet' of these life-stories, which are divorced from the wider context of actually knowing the people behind the narratives. There is seldom an opportunity for interaction between the 'real people' who visit the *Lifetimes* museum and the 'real people' who are the *Lifetimes* museum (other than through the occasional reminiscence sessions – which have always

been enthusiastically received by the museum visitors). In this sense the museum's 'portrait of real life' became a 'portrait of still-life'. In other words, what the museum regards as an opportunity to shift the emphasis from 'objects' (and 'places') to 'people', has the opposite effect on its visitors - of turning people into 'displayed objects'.

The second finding regards *Lifetimes'* influence on its viewers' perception of Croydon and its history, which was one of the core objectives of the professionals and Croydon Council in creating the museum (see MacDonald, 1995 and 1998). The difference here was especially pronounced. While most visitors stated that the museum did not change their overall image of Croydon and its history, *all* of the staff members, without exception, claimed that *Lifetimes* has completely transformed their view of Croydon and its people. Once again, it is, in all probability, the ongoing *practice* and *active involvement* with the borough and its people, that has transformed Croydon's image in their eyes, rather than the end result of their endeavours - the museum display itself. Likewise, the lack of direct interaction and personal involvement, alongside the resulting lack of attachment, may account for the visitors' apparent indifference to the museum's earnest efforts to transform their image of Croydon. This may also, partially explain the extremely low number of returning visitors to *Lifetimes*.

Macdonald's concept of 'cultural imagining' (1992) is also instrumental in explaining the visitors 'non-reaction', as it highlights the fact that visitors are not passive recipients of knowledge and ideas. Instead, they bring their own vision and particular preconceptions towards certain imaginings (Macdonald, 1992: 407-408). In other words, the visitors preconceptions and expectations (which are influenced by their personal background, past experiences, knowledge, beliefs, motivations and interests) play an important role in shaping their reading of the museum and its display (see Belcher, 1991: 182; and Silverman, 1995: 161-162). However, the consumers' expectations and particular readings of the museum and its presentation do not always coincide with the producers' intentions and objectives.

Museum Consumption:

From Perception To Practice

To better understand the attitudes of visitors towards *Lifetimes*, the study further explored the perception and consumption of museums in general, and of local history museums in particular.

One of the most unpredicted results of this study was the, disappointingly low, overall frequency of museum visiting. The intention was to compare informants' observed visit to the *Lifetimes* museum with other museum visits and related leisure activities. However, while all of my 'visitor' informants had declared during the introductory session, that they visit museums "at least three a year", only one family, out of eighteen 'visitor' households, privately visited a museum - once. The 'rate' of museum visiting, beyond the work-related occasions, was not much more promising among my 'staff' informants. The study inadvertently became an exploration of 'non-consumption' rather than consumption, at least in terms of leisure practices, which in itself provided an interesting and significant insight into the studied phenomenon.

Visitor studies' habitually divide the public into two basic groups - 'museum visitors' and 'non-visitors', often proceeding to isolate various sub-divisions within the visitor section, so to create a 'continuum' or 'spectrum'. While Hood's (1983) influential divisions are certainly effective (see section three), they are still bound to the basic, traditional dyad of 'visitors' and 'non-visitors'. The ethnographic evidence of this study suggested an expansion of the conventional dyad to include a third, distinct category of consumers, which I define as - 'gallery goers'. The 'gallery goers' were as critical of contemporary museums as the non-visitors. However, while non-visitors tended to perceive museums as dull, 'dead' places, the perception shared by many 'gallery goers' was often that museums have become - "too child-centred" and didactic, as well as "too entertaining" - at the expense of the more 'spiritual' experience they claimed to seek. Much like the non-visitors, 'gallery goers' felt out of place in most contemporary museums, consequently shifting their interest to art galleries, which are far less didactic, and therefore provide a much more 'open-ended', individualistic, emotional (or even 'spiritual') experience.

Miles (1998) maintains that the decision to visit a museum (or participate in any other leisure-time activity) involves three main factors that are mentally evaluated and

balanced against one another: (a) the amount of effort required (in terms of time, money energy, and so on); (b) the magnitude and value of the rewards obtained; and (c) the likelihood, or otherwise, that the experience will be successful / enjoyable (1998: 26). Building on this study, as well as on Kelly's work (1982, 1983) on leisure opportunities; Prince's (1983) premise that an individual's attitudes towards an activity will be the strongest influence on whether or not that activity is undertaken; and Hood's (1983) examination of the different criteria employed in making leisure choices - the analysis of the data emerging from this study highlighted the clear distinction between individual leisure practices, which informants, or members of their household did on their own, and collective leisure practices, which informant households did together, as a family.

Museum visiting, with and *for* children, often came into the category of 'family time', yet it was never referred to as a recreational activity, or a 'leisure choice'. Instead, it was viewed as part of the parental 'obligation' towards what I term - *'cultural provisioning'* - an activity that is beneficial for the children's education, cultivation and socialisation. However, a variety of *structural* and *cultural* deterrents to museum visiting (see Prince, 1983; and Merriman, 1991) meant that this activity was often perceived as an ordeal. The latter explains the lack of enthusiasm among many of my 'parent-informants' to frequently engage in this activity, while the former accounts for the difference between *declared* and *observed* museum visiting practices. This further emphasised the distinct characteristics of museum consumption, as a 'transitional' activity, located between recreation and education, between 'choice' and 'chore'. Kelly's (1982) definition of leisure has been exceptionally useful in this regard - "...three orientations are common to most ancient and modern approaches: (1) Leisure is distinguished from what has to be done. It is not enough to say that leisure is "non-work." Nevertheless, leisure is consistently differentiated from the realm of necessity, of what has to be done. (2) Most important, leisure is freely chosen. Such freedom may be relative rather than absolute, but at least there is the perception on the part of the participant that the activity could have not been done. (3) The motivation is largely intrinsic. Leisure may combine reasons for participation and anticipated benefits, but central is that it is done primarily for the quality of the experience" (Kelly, 1982: 22). Following these orientations, museum visiting can be (and for my parent and grandparent informants *is*) perceived as an activity, which, although it is a freely chosen, is not 'consistently differentiated from the realm of necessity', but rather an activity that *has* to be done, because (much like exercising or going to the gym) - it is 'good for you' / your child.

However, not all visitors fall into the category of parents, grandparents and educators. Different people choose to visit museums, or avoid them, for a variety of different reasons. Moussouri's doctoral study (1997a) divides visitors' cited reasons for museum visiting into six general categories that reflect the "functions a museum is perceived to serve in the social / cultural life of visitors: education, entertainment, social event, life cycle, place, and practical issues" (Moussouri, 1997a, in: Falk & Dierking, 2000: 72). Similarly, Miles (1998) highlights the variety of motivations visitors might have for visiting a museum, including: instructing or entertaining themselves (or their families); showing off their knowledge to the members of their visitor-group; using the restaurant facilities; or simply getting out of the rain (1998: 25).

In terms of the adult's individual leisure practices, what most of my informants - visitors, non-visitors, and 'gallery goers' alike - seemed to truly enjoy as a recreational activity, was shopping. At first glance shopping and museum visiting seem very similar, in terms of the physical experience of walking round a designated space, gazing at and occasionally examining objects on display, or engaging in what Treinen has termed - 'active laziness' and 'cultural window-shopping' (Graf & Treinen, 1983, in: Graf, 1994: 79). The two activities can be equally taxing, and yet shopping was usually perceived as an enjoyable 'leisure choice', while museum visiting was often perceived as a demanding cultural, or educational 'chore'. The answer lies in three core elements, which are part of most shopping experiences, yet missing from most museum visiting experiences, namely, *Choice*, *Tactility* and what I have termed - *Potential Ownership*.

Choice: for most informants, museum visiting was not really a 'choice', but rather a 'cultural chore'. The choice of *which* museum to visit was often dictated by the topic the children were studying at school, or by a program the children saw on television. The museum visit itself involves an even lesser degree of choice, seeing that where you go, what you see, what you do, and what you do not do, is often dictated by the museum in terms of - layout, suggested 'routes' and activities, as well as the overall 'decorum' that is expected (and at times demanded) within such a setting.

Tactility: touching and handling the objects on display is rarely possible in a museum experience, which then becomes an essentially *visual* practice that is lacking in terms of the more sensual or tangible experience it can potentially provide. This in turn leads to the third and perhaps most important distinction from shopping which is -

Potential Ownership: the possibility to purchase, take away and own, a tangible memento of the display. While the shopping experience is all about potential ownership - through the processes of selection, acquisition and appropriation - the museum experience is limited in this regard, as it cannot offer its 'clients' any kind of physical acquisition other than through the museum-shop and its souvenirs. Purchasing a souvenir at the museum shop therefore plays a central role in the visiting experience, as it offers a means of 'compensation' for the evident lack of choice, tactility and ownership. By providing the missing tangible element, as well as freedom of choice and potential purchase, the souvenir acts as a 'transitional object' between the visit and its appropriation. The visitors' desire to 'take away something tangible' as a memento of their visit to *Lifetimes* was manifest. Most of the visitors I encountered asked for a 'print-out' of the computerised stories they have read or, more commonly, a 'print-out' of their quiz questions and quiz results. Unfortunately, copyright laws meant that such 'print-outs' were normally unavailable. The visitors' disappointment was deepened by the lack of a conventional museum shop.

While souvenir shops are typically viewed in the media and the academic literature as a negative outcome of mass consumer culture (cf. Hewison, 1987; and Belk, 1995), Miller (1987) argues that consuming, as an act of agency, plays an imperative role in our appropriation of the material environment. Our secondary relationship with purchased goods or artefacts enables us, according to Miller, to overcome the object's alienation. By investing it with sentimental value and meaning we appropriate the object, which then becomes part of our personal possessions and identity. This complex process is defined by Miller as 'work invested by the consumer upon the purchased object', translating it from an alienable to an inalienable condition: "From being a symbol of estrangement and price value to being an artefact invested with particular inseparable connotations" (1987: 190). This process is manifest in both, the case of museum visitors and their souvenirs, and, especially, the case of individual collectors and their collections (see Belk, 1994; 1995).

The initial expectation, during the early stages of fieldwork, was of finding that the avid collectors among my 'staff' and 'visitor' informants, especially those who had a keen interest in collecting objects and artefacts, would prove keen museum visitors as well. This preliminary expectation was not met. Instead, the study's findings highlighted the importance of acknowledging and distinguishing between various 'kinds' of collectors, namely - 'object' collectors; 'memory' collectors; and 'knowledge' collectors - seeing that

the members of each 'collector category' (alongside the 'non-collector' category) expressed distinctly different attitudes towards museums and museum consumption. Many 'non-collectors' perceive museums in their disciplinarian, 'Victorian' form - mentally linking them with a school or a library, and often emphasising their cultural and educational role, or value.

Most 'object' collectors perceive museums in their ancient 'Mausoleum' form - mentally linking them (for better or worse) with a church or a temple, or a 'monument to the dead', and frequently highlighting the authentic and aesthetic qualities of their displayed objects. Surprisingly, many of the 'object' collectors I met generally disliked museums, often stating that they find them 'boring and dull'. The only exception was when the museum presented the same kind of objects, as they collect themselves, in which case they regarded the museum as a kind of 'reference catalogue' to their own collection.

Many 'memory' collectors perceived museums in their 'egalitarian' form - mentally linking them with a community centre. And yet, most of them expressed the same kind of 'non-participant' attitude towards museum visiting as the 'object' collectors, often dismissing museums as 'uninteresting' or 'irrelevant'. Again, the only exception was when the museum's presentation was directly related to the collectors' own life-experiences and memoirs. However, most museums are unable to generate the degree of familiarity and identification that meets the wishes of the 'memory' collectors, unless they have been active participants in the creation of the museum's presentation.

'Knowledge' collectors were the only type of collector I met that enjoyed museum visiting. The explanation lies in the nature of 'knowledge' collecting, which centres upon a control over, and ownership of - information and knowledge. 'Knowledge' collectors perceive museums in their Renaissance form, mentally linking them with a 'Cabinet of Curiosities' - a magical place of discovery, knowledge and surprises. As such, the museum simultaneously invokes and satisfies curiosity, providing an endless supply of information, which is both the essence and the currency of 'knowledge' collecting.

Overall, the ethnographic findings endorse the study's core hypothesis - that people's present perception, and consequent consumption of museums is a product of their past experiences and especially their early museum encounters. Most of my 'staff informants' and some of my 'visitor informants' experienced a positive, early socialisation into museum visiting routines, which were often perceived as a 'treat', or a 'day out' with

close family members. However, for many of my long-term 'visitor informants' early encounters with museums came in the form of school visits, which are frequently associated with discipline, restriction, schoolwork, boredom and 'clipboards'. It is interesting to note that school visit recollections often centred on 'context memories' (see Falk & Dierking, 1992, 1997; 2000) such as the journey to the museum and back, and the out-of-school lunch, rather than on the museum display. This was evident in both adults' recollections of their past school visits, and children's current museum accounts. 'Context memories' were equally prevalent among those who had positive museum experiences, however they often remembered the museum presentation as well. It is therefore the *quality* of these early experiences, along with the *quality* of their contexts which have a profound and lasting effect on the perception and consequent consumption of museums in later life, be it as a gratifying leisure choice, an edifying cultural chore, or any other transitional category in between.

Past, Place & People

Thus far the findings centred upon the discourse, practice and overall experience of museums in general, which affect the experience of local history museums in particular. However, the data emerging from this study clearly indicates the influence of other, distinct factors, such as the perception of, and attitude towards - history, locality and community. The following findings present these factors and their critical significance to the consumption of local history museums, and the *Lifetimes* case study in particular.

Following Merriman's study (1989b, 1991, 2000) specific attitude-measuring questions regarding history, heritage and 'the past' (which were originally introduced in Merriman's 1991 postal survey) were incorporated into the interview format that was used with both the survey of visitors to *Lifetimes* (see Appendix 1) and the long-term informants' interviews (see Appendix 3). The overall findings endorse Merriman's core arguments, that most people attach *some* value to knowing about the past, and show some degree of interest in actively doing so. The forms and levels of history that my informants were interested in (be it personal, familial, local, national or international), as well as the ways they choose to access, explore, absorb and appropriate that history, varied in accordance with age, ethnicity, education, occupation and socio-economic status. While most informants granted a more authoritative status to history, heritage was commonly viewed as more personal and therefore altogether more accessible.

Historic houses were particularly favoured, as they were perceived as providing both a real and an imaginary context. Heritage presentations of everyday life, not unlike the *Lifetimes* presentation, were also of interest, providing the presentation was related to the informant's own life-experiences, or living-memory recollections.

The ethnographic data emerging from this study categorically endorses Merriman's (1991) core argument - that the public is not a passive homogeneous-mass, manipulated by misleading, ideological presentations, or 'hypnotised' by nostalgic images of the past. While most of my informants expressed an overall enjoyment of, and preference for heritage displays, they were often critical in their viewing of such presentations, comparing them to their own knowledge, values and beliefs. As a result, their voiced 'imagining' of the past was usually neither romantic, nor nostalgic. Nevertheless, nostalgia was still an important part of people's discourse, although it was more commonly manifested on a personal scale, rather than a national one, as a personal nostalgia for a personal - *past*, *place* and *people*, and, perhaps more crucially a personal sense of *localised* identity and belonging - to a *past*, *place and* people - as Nan's extraordinary case study demonstrated.

In terms of attitudes towards place in general (cf. Ralph, 1976; and Knox, 1995) and Croydon in particular, it soon became apparent that Croydon was not one, unified place, but rather an amalgamation of places, encompassing a mosaic of histories, communities and landscapes (see MacDonald, 1995 and 1998). Exploring local people's perception and practice of 'place' in general, and of Croydon in particular, revealed these complexities, including both the meaningful places within the borough, and the meaningless 'non-place' that, for many residents, *is* the borough.

Croydon's real divide emerged as being not so much its demographic 'North/South' division (see MacDonald, 1995 and 1998) but rather a 'Core/Perimeter' divide, separating the centre of the borough from its surrounding neighbourhoods, with *'Central Croydoners'* expressing an altogether more positive view of Croydon. However, an evocative notion of a 'community lost' (cf. Tönnies, 1963/1887; and Wirth, 1969/1938) still prevails, heightening the longing for a sense of localism and belonging (cf. Macdonald, 1997a; Wallman, 1998; and Lovell, 1998). Herein lies *Lifetimes'* challenge, in its ongoing attempt to expand its audience and encourage repeat visits, whilst maintaining an accessible, and meaningful, local history museum.

Key Contributions

The study presented here aspired to further contribute to the field of visitor studies by addressing various aspects of museum consumption that have been largely ignored in previous analyses. Prime among these are a comparison between shopping and museum visiting; an in-depth exploration of *collectors'* perception and consequent practices of museum consumption; a proposal for expanding the traditional, rudimentary dyad of 'visitors' and 'non-visitors' to include a new, distinctive category, which I define as - 'gallery goers'; and the emphasis on viewing museum visiting as a complex, 'transitional' activity that is located between 'choice' and 'chore' and therefore is neither 'leisure' *per se*, nor 'labour' *per se*, but rather a means of, what I term - 'cultural provisioning'.

Furthermore, by demonstrating the merit and contribution of each of the multiple methodologies employed in this research, and the 'layer' of data it provides, the study attempted to advocate both the potential of an ethnographic approach and the advantages of employing a synthesis of cross-disciplinary methods.

Nevertheless, the most significant contributions this multi-layered study aspired to make were - the establishment of much-expanded perception of a local history museum, as a figurative meeting point of - *museum*, *past*, *place* and *people*; and the realisation that the consumption of local history museums is linked not only to the dynamics of learned leisure practices, and the enduring effects of early museum experiences, but also, and perhaps mainly, to notions of *localism* (see Macdonald, 1997a; and Wallman, 1998), history and locality, identity and belonging. These elements come together to create a new view of local history museums and their consumption, which is illustrated by the *'Flow of Influence'* and the *'Past, Place & People'* models that follow. The later model illustrates the overall conclusion of this study, demonstrating how the correlation between our personal identity and the museum's presentation indicates the extent of our interest in the museum, and its consequent consumption.

Conclusions & Implications

"We go to museums to learn about ourselves... to come away with a stronger sense of ourselves as implicated in a vast web of tradition and knowledge"

(Crane, 2000: 12)

"The glass of a showcase gives both a transparent vision

...and a reflection of our own faces"

(Pearce, 1994: 204)

Local history museums are a figurative meeting point of - *museum*, *past*, *place* and *people*, which have the potential to create an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts, and profoundly related to our sense of identity and belonging. The perception of museums as an appropriate, gratifying medium for accessing such abstract concepts is crucial for its consumption. Being able to identify with, and appropriate the presentation is essential for creating a *meaningful* museum experience (see Macdonald, 1992; Silverman, 1995), which, in turn leads to a sense of attachment and ownership, resulting in repeated consumption.

The following model [see Diagram 5.1] demonstrates how the different aspects of this study come together to create a 'flow of influence' surrounding the two core elements of the thesis - the *perception of museums*; and the *perception of past, place and people*.

The model illustrates how our present perception of museums is influenced by our past museum experiences, which are divided into *recent* experiences, and *early* experiences. The latter have an enduring affect, while the former are modified with each successive museum encounter. The *quality* of all museum experiences is affected by the levels of the physical, mental and conceptual access and comfort they provide. This 'hierarchy of visitor needs' includes everything from light levels and colour schemes, to noise, 'crowd density' levels and visitor 'traffic flows', as well as the design and content of the presentation itself, and, especially its conceptual intelligibility (see Screven 1974, 1986; and Hein, 1998). The visitor's demographic profile (which includes: age, gender, class, ethnicity, education, occupation, family status, life stage, and lifestyle) has a direct effect on their perception of museums, as well as on their access and comfort levels. Finally, our perception of museums directly influences our museum consumption, as the ethnography presented here clearly demonstrates. Linking the different areas of work explored in this thesis, the model further illustrates how our perception of *past*, *place* and *people*, simultaneously reflects and constructs our sense of identity, community and belonging, which in turn affects our ability to identify with a local history museum. This sense of association and empathy allows for appropriation, which then creates attachment, belonging and ownership. The latter generates a sense of loyalty and emotional gravity, leading to recurring consumption.

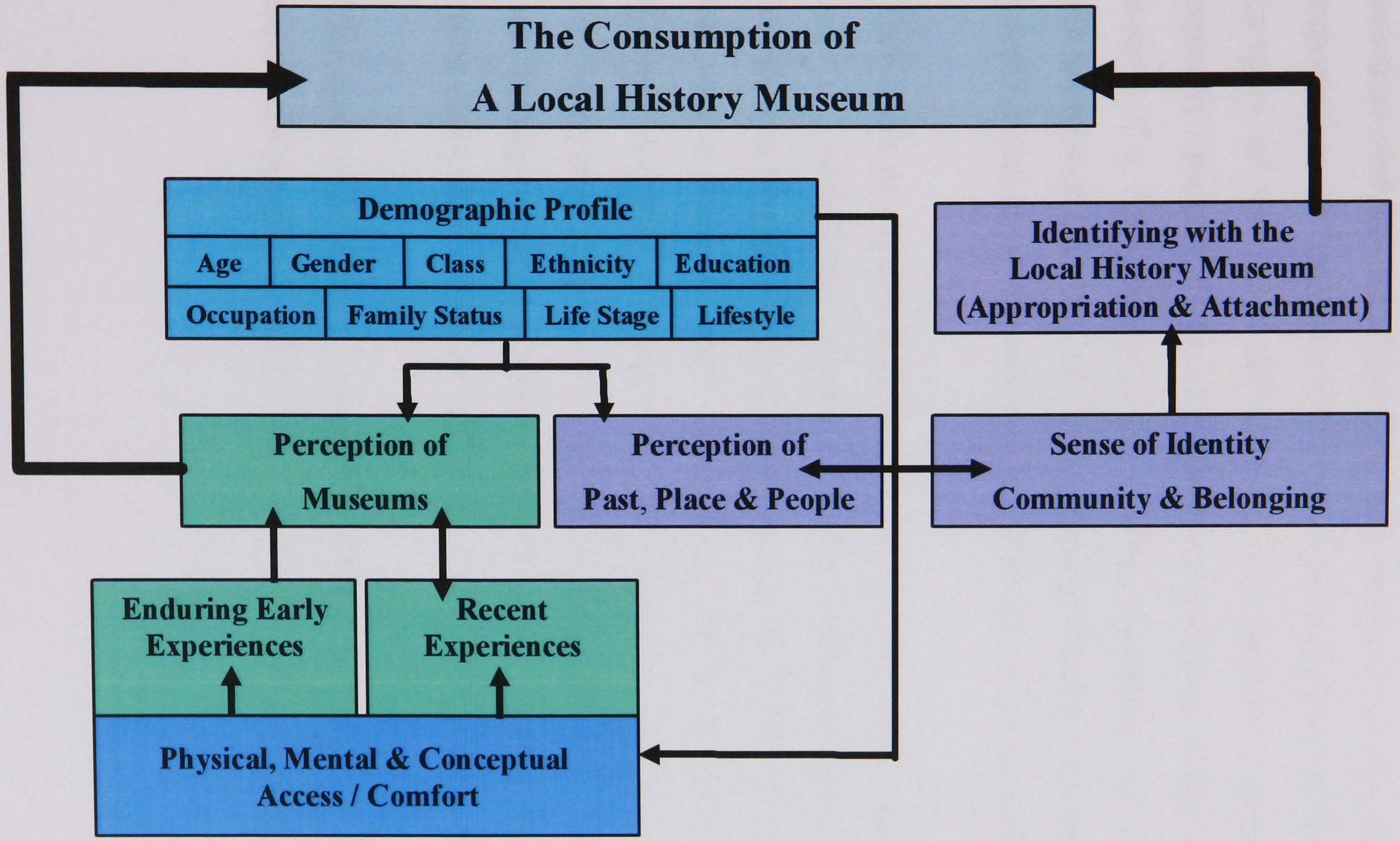

Diagram 5.1: Museum Consumption Model - 'Flow of Influence'

The ethnographic case study of the *Lifetimes* museum also highlights several examples of *non-consumption* - from the typical case of the one-time visitor, to the extreme case of the non-visitor. Croydon residents who choose not to revisit the museum, or not to visit it at all, may well perceive *Lifetimes* as a - 'non-museum', presenting a 'non-history' of a 'non-community', in a 'non-place'. Unsurprisingly, this evokes no meaning, and therefore creates no interest, resulting in - no consumption. In the case of the typical one-time-visitors, the notion of a 'non-museum' reflects the discrepancy between their expectations of *Lifetimes* and their actual experience of the museum. Within the larger category of the non-visitors, those who perceive *Lifetimes* as a 'non-museum' are typically members of the local historical societies. In this instance, the somewhat harsh notion of a 'non-museum' reflects their aspirations for a conventional, authoritative, place-oriented museum, and bitter disappointment with the end result. This leads to an overall dismissal of *Lifetimes*, which they do not even *consider* visiting.

This is not to say that *Lifetimes* has altogether failed - quite the contrary - it was, and still is, a remarkable attempt to create a new and innovative local history museum, which won its creators several national and international awards and, more importantly, has won a place in many Croydoners' hearts. Applying this analysis model to the *'Central Croydoners'* among my informants, who typically support the museum, reveals that when *past*, *place* and *people* coincide to produce a sense of identity, community and belonging, the attachment leads not only to recurring consumption, but also, in some cases, to an active participation and involvement in museum activities.

This leads to a second consumption model [see Diagram 5.2], which centres upon the main building blocks of our sense of identity and belonging - *past*, *place* and *people*.

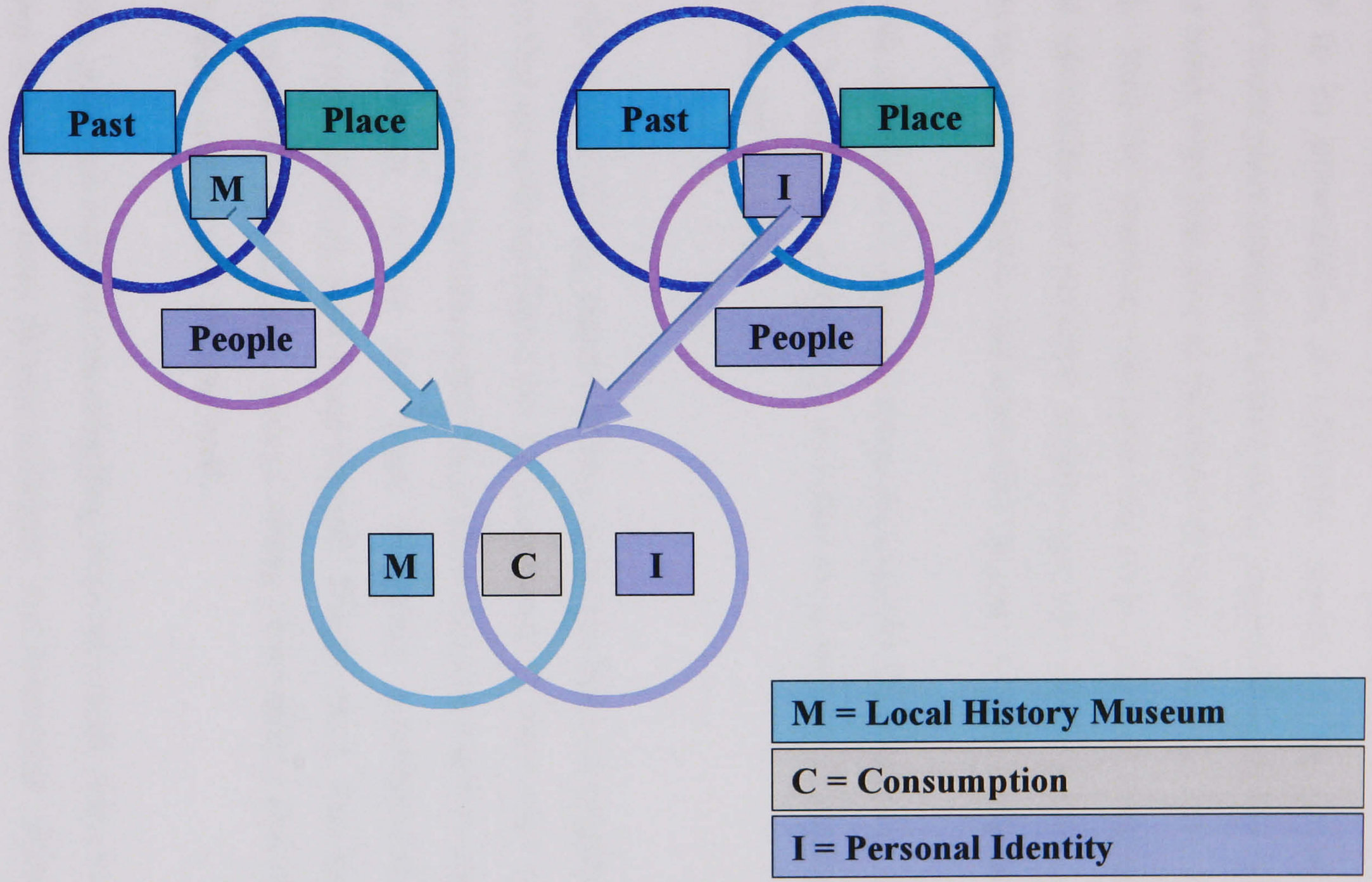

Diagram 5.2: Museum Consumption Model - 'Past, Place & People'

The model illustrates the correlation between our personal identity and the museum's presentation, which indicates the extent of our interest in the museum, and its consequent consumption. Stewart provides an example of a limited correlation with the *Lifetimes* display. Although he is a proud 'Croydoner' and an active member of the *'Local Studies Forum'*, his perception of Croydon's *past*, *place* and *people* is quite different to its presentation in *Lifetimes,* insofar as he would have preferred an altogether more place-oriented presentation, emphasising earlier periods of history. On the other hand, Nan provides an example of high correlation with the *Lifetimes* display. Not only does the museum represent her sixty years of residency in Croydon, her recorded memories and personal objects are part of its history display. Nan visited *Lifetimes* on a regular basis, and soon after became an active museum volunteer.

While both models have emerged from the specific Croydon case study presented here, they could be applied, practically, to other local history museums, presenting other - pasts, places and peoples.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of this study has been its pragmatic application. It is not often that an anthropologist has an opportunity to share their research findings and see their consequent recommendations implemented into policy and everyday practice. Croydon Museum Service has been extremely accommodating and supportive throughout the fieldwork period and beyond. What's more, they have been consistently open to evaluation and critique, always taking observations and suggestions on board, and frequently acting upon them as well.

The wider, practical implications emerging from this study seem to suggest that, in their endeavour to attract a more diverse audience, and encourage repeat visits, local history museums should be more attentive to the needs and interests of their public and promote greater local participation. For example, the museum could invite local communities and neighbourhoods to create their own temporary exhibitions, highlighting what *they* perceive to be of value and significance. It could invite different 'types' of local collectors to display their object, memory or knowledge collections, as exemplified by the 'Gallery 33' project (see Peirson, 1992) and the 'People's Show' (see Mullen, 1994). Such activities would expand the contemporary emphasis upon museum education, thus acknowledging members of the public who use (or would like to use) museums for other purposes, such as inspiration, self-expression, identity and self-actualisation.

Having said that, there are no 'magical' solutions, nor should museums be limited to a specific form, in fact - diversity is the key. There has been considerable debate on what that diversity might entail, as well as on the possible future 'paths' for museums (cf. Weil, 1990, 1995; Boylan, 1992; Merriman, 1997; Hooper-Greenhill, 1997, 2000; Spalding, 2002; and Witcomb, 2003).

Ultimately, museum are, and should be, different things to different people, as long as they can provide some kind of - *meaningful experience* and *inspiration* - be it through a sense of empowerment, education or entertainment, through evoking memories, or invoking, and satisfying, curiosities. "The poetic museum will then not be just a repository for past thoughts and fading memories, but will become a palace of wonder and discovery - a home, once again, for the Muses, those magnificent, spirited and inspiring daughters of Memory" (Spalding, 2002: 167).

It is hoped that this study, with its synthesis of eclectic, interdisciplinary methods and advocated ethnographic approach, will inspire further reflection, creativity and development in both museums and museum research.

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Web Sites

Edina Digimap Website – www.edina.ac.uk/digimap

Museum Association Website – www.museumassociation.org

Office Of National Statistics Website – www.statistics.gov.uk

Appendices

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Appendix 1

Visitors' Survey Questionnaire*

(Basis For Informants' Introductory Interview)

** Asterisk marked questions were inspired by Merriman's postal survey (1991)*

Questionnaire

Date: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____ Round _____ Out of 50

Section A:

Visitor Profile

A1) Locality: Do you live locally?

Where?

(A1a) How long have you lived there?

A2) Place of Birth: Where were you born?

(A2a) Where do you feel your 'roots' lie?

(A2b) What do you think of Croydon?

A3) Age (*Census Categories*) -

Are you - *15 or under; 16-29; 30-44; 45-59; 60-74; 75 or over;*

A4) Ethnic Origin (*Census Categories*) -

How would you describe your ethnic background -

White; Irish; Black Caribbean; Black African; Black Other;

Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Asian Other;

Other; Prefer Not To Answer;

A5) Occupation: Are you currently -

Working? [*Part/Full time? What do you do?*]

Taking care of the Home / Children? [*How many? / Parent-Helper?*]

A6) Education: At what age did you leave school?

Are you still studying? [*Part/Full time? What are you studying?*]

A7) Hobbies: How do you spend your free time?

A7a) How would you spend a typical weekend?

Section B:

The *Lifetimes* Museum

B1) Why did you come to *Lifetimes* today?

B2) Is this your first visit?

B3) Are you visiting - Alone / With Family / With Friends / Other?

B4) What was your first impression of *Lifetimes*?

B5) What did you like most about *Lifetimes*?

B6) What did you dislike most about *Lifetimes*?

B7) How does *Lifetimes* compare to other museums? → Is it better / worse? → In what way?

B8) What did you get out of your visit today?

B9) Do you think the stories presented in *Lifetimes* are real life-stories or fictional?

B9a) Were the stories relevant to your own life-experiences and memories?

B9b) Did they change your image of Croydon and its history?

Section C:

Museum Consumption

C1) Do you think museums are important?

C1a) Do you think they are boring / fun? Why?

C2*) Which of the following do museums remind you of most -

Monument to the Dead / Church or Temple / Community Centre / School or Library / Department Store / Other

C3*) How often do you visit museums -

Never / Once or Twice a Year / Three to Six Times a Year / Seven or More Times a Year

C4*) When was your last visit?

C4a) Where did you go?

C4b) Who did you go with?

C4c) Who chose to go to that particular museum and why?

C5) Do you remember your first museum visit?

C5a) How old were you?

C5b) Which museum did you go to?

C5c) With whom did you go?

C5d) Did you like it?

Section D:

The Past

D1*) Do you think knowing about the past is important? → Why?

D2*) Which is most important <u>for you</u> to know about -

World History / British History / Local History / Family History?

D2a) Why is it important?

D3*) What, in your eyes, is the best way of finding out about the past? → Why?

Appendix 2

Informants'
Activities Diary

Day	**Date**	**Activity**	*How would you define the activity?* *(Please circle)*	*Who suggested the activity?*	*Who took part in the activity?*	*How much did you enjoy the activity - on a - 1 to 10 scale?* *[1 = not at all]* *[10 = very much]* *(Please circle)*
			Leisure-Activity; *Educational-Activity;* *Family-Activity;* *Other;*			**1 ; 2 ; 3 ; 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 7 ; 8 ; 9 ; 10 ;**
			Leisure-Activity; *Educational-Activity;* *Family-Activity;* *Other;*			**1 ; 2 ; 3 ; 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 7 ; 8 ; 9 ; 10 ;**
			Leisure-Activity; *Educational-Activity;* *Family-Activity;* *Other;*			**1 ; 2 ; 3 ; 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 7 ; 8 ; 9 ; 10 ;**
			Leisure-Activity; *Educational-Activity;* *Family-Activity;* *Other;*			**1 ; 2 ; 3 ; 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 7 ; 8 ; 9 ; 10 ;**
			Leisure-Activity; *Educational-Activity;* *Family-Activity;* *Other;*			**1 ; 2 ; 3 ; 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 7 ; 8 ; 9 ; 10 ;**

Appendix 3

Informants' Final Interview*

&

Life History Review

** Asterisk marked questions were inspired by Merriman's postal survey (1991)*

Final Interview

Life History Review

When and where were you born?

Where did you grow up?
What was it like?
Did you enjoy it?

What was your home / bedroom like?
What did you like most about it?
What did you like least about it?

What is your earliest childhood memory?
What is your fondest childhood memory?
What is your worst childhood memory?

Have you lived through any historical event?
What do you remember?

What did your parents do for a living?
What were they like? Who were you closest to?

How many people were there in your household?
What were they like? Who were you closest to?

At what age did you leave school?
Or are you still studying?

Which schools did you go to as a child?
What were they like?

What is your earliest school-days memory?
What is your fondest school-days memory?
What is your worst school-days memory?

What were your lessons like?
What were your school-outings like?
What were your museum-visits like?
How often did you go?
Where did you go?
Did you enjoy it?

Do you remember your first museum visit?
How old were you?
Which museum did you go to?
With whom did you go?
What was it like?
Did you enjoy it?

Did you have any hobbies as a child?
Did you collect anything as a child?
Do you collect anything now?

How did you spend your free time?
How would you spend a typical weekend?
What did you do with your family?
What did you do with your friends?

What did you want to be 'when you grow up'?

When and where did you meet your partner?

Where was your partner born and raised?

What was your wedding day like?

What does your partner do for a living?

Are you currently working?
What do you do?

Where was your first house?
What was it like?
What did you like most about it?
What did you like least about it?

When did you move into your current house?
What do you like most about it?
What do you like least about it?

How do you feel about the area you live in?

How do you feel about Croydon in general?

Where do you feel your roots lie?

What was the best time of your life?

How many people are there in your household today?

When and where were your children born and raised?

What is your fondest memory, regarding your children?
What is your worst memory, regarding your children?

What do / did your children want to be "when they grow up"?
Do / did they have any hobbies?
Do / did they collect anything?

How do you spend your free time <u>these</u> days?
How would you spend a typical weekend?
What do you do with your family?
What do you do with your friends?

What do you think of children's schooling these days?

What do you think of children's leisure activities these days?

<u>Museums</u>

What do you think about museums these days?
Are they important? Are they boring? Are they fun? Why?

**What of the following do museums remind you of most -*
Monument to the Dead / Church or Temple / Community Centre / School or Library / Department Store / Other

**How often do you visit museums -*
Never / Once or Twice a Year / Three to Six Times a Year / Seven or More Times a Year

**When was your last visit?*
Where did you go?
Who did you go with?
Who chose to go to that particular museum and Why?
What was it like?
Did you enjoy it?

<u>The Past</u>

**Do you think knowing about the past is important? → Why?*

**Which is most important <u>for you</u> to know about -*
World History / British History / Local History / Family History?

**What, in your eyes, is the best way of finding out about the past?*

If you could travel through time -
Where and 'when' would you go? → Why?
Where and 'when' would you prefer to live? → Why?

**What do you think life was like in the past?*

**What do you think life will be like in the future?*

<u>History & Heritage</u>

What do you think of when you hear the word 'History'?

What do you think of when you hear the word 'Heritage'?

Is there a difference between History and Heritage?

How do you feel about Croydon's History & Heritage?

How do you feel about the way Croydon's past is presented in the 'Lifetimes' museum?

<u>The *Lifetimes* Museum</u>

What was your first impression of 'Lifetimes'?

What did you like about 'Lifetimes'?

What did you dislike about 'Lifetimes'?

How does 'Lifetimes' compare to other museums?
Is it better / worse? In what way?

Were the stories and objects presented at 'Lifetimes' relevant to your own life-experiences?

Did they change your image of Croydon and its history?

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the Clocktower?

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Lifetimes?

And finally -
If you had your own museum what would it be like? Who would it be for?

Appendix 4

Informants'

Deposit Agreement Form

Deposit Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that your taped interviews and copied photographs are used in accordance with your wishes.

1) May I use your interview material in my PhD Thesis? YES / NO

2) May I use your interview material in future publications? YES / NO

3) May I use your interview material for educational purposes (e.g. lectures)? YES / NO

4) May I use your interview material in public performances (e.g. talks)? YES / NO

5) May I use your interview material for broadcasting (e.g. radio, TV)? YES / NO

6) Are you willing to assign your copyright in your recordings to me?
[This means I may use the material in your taped interviews even if I am unable to contact you]

YES / NO

7) Are you willing to assign your copyright in your photographs to me?
[This means I may use your copied photographs even if I am unable to contact you]

YES / NO

8) Would you <u>like</u> your name to be mentioned?
[The data will otherwise be presented under a <u>false</u> name in order to protect your privacy]

YES / NO

Signed: Date:
[Interviewee]

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Signed: Date:

[Anat Hecht, PhD Research Student, Department of Anthropology, University College London]

Appendix 5

Informants' Index

Demographic & Biographic Profiles

Informants' Index

Demographic & Biographic Profiles

The following tables recap the demographic and biographic profiles of my core informants, which are divided into two main informant groups - 'Visitor Households' [1] and 'Museum Staff / *Clocktower* Employees'. The 'Visitor Households' are then divided into three sub-groups, according to their residential area within the Croydon borough [2].

While casual, informal contacts were maintained on different levels, with different members of each 'Visitor Household', only one member of each household acted as the - **core informant**, with whom a closer and more continuous relationship was maintained. This entailed various, informal interviews, monthly 'activity diary' meetings, and an extended life-history session (all of which normally took place at the informant's home). Other, more casual meetings and conversations also took place, outside the context of informants' homes.

Contacts with museum staff and various *Clocktower* employees were more casual and untailored, due to our almost-daily encounters at the *Clocktower* centre throughout the fieldwork period. Nevertheless, each core informant from the 'Museum Staff / *Clocktower* Employees' informant group was interviewed, using the same interviews and life-history-session formats that were used with the core informants from the 'Visitor Households' informant group.

The presented index tables centre upon these **core informants**, encapsulating their demographic and biographic profiles (during the fieldwork period). Informants' names have been replaced by pseudonyms, unless the informant has specifically asked that their real name be used. Informants' occupations have been stated very generally, so to protect people's identity and privacy, as well as respect specific requests for anonymity, in accordance with the data protection act.

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*[1] All of my core **'Visitor Informants'** have stated, during their initial interview session, that they visit museums - "at least three times a year". These occasions, as was later established, included accompanying their children on school-visits, and / or taking them to museums during school-breaks, as well as visiting art galleries (which informants habitually did on their own).*

*[2] Most of my core **'Visitor Informants'** and many of my core **'Clocktower Employee Informants'** were long-term Croydon residents, whereas most of my core **'Museum Staff Informants'** were new to the Croydon borough.*

Core 'Visitor' Informants

North Croydon Residents

Table removed due to third party copyright

Central Croydon Residents

Table removed due to third party copyright

South Croydon Residents

Table removed due to third party copyright

Core 'Museum Staff' Informants

& '*Clocktower* Employees' Informants

Table removed due to third party copyright

Core 'Museum Staff' Informants

& '*Clocktower* Employees' Informants Continued

Table removed due to third party copyright

Other officials interviewed during the fieldwork period, that were not informants per se, (and therefore not mentioned in the tables above) include - Lifetimes' principal officer; Lifetimes' education officer; as well as various teachers and adult-helpers from the studied Croydon primary schools.

Appendix 6

Visitor Observation Forms:

a) *Clocktower* Observation Form

b) *Lifetimes* Visitor Profile Form

c) *Lifetimes* Museum Observation Form

Clocktower

Observation Form

[Page 1 of 2]

Date: _____ Day: _____ Round: _____ Out of 50

Visitors' Profile Codes

Estimated Age & Gender Group

Age Groups	15 or under	16 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 59	60 - 74	75 or over
Male	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	7	8	9	10	11	12

Estimated Ethnic Group - Asian **(A)** / Black **(B)** / White **(W)**

Disability - **(D)**

Gate +Split Observation Count From Main Entrance
Morning (11:30 - 11:50)

Visitor No.	A. Box Office	B. Library / Café	C. Notice Board / Museum Interactive	D. Shop	E. Tourist Info. Centre	F. Riesco Gallery / Temp. Gallery	G. WC	H. *Lifetimes* / Cinema / Bar	Visitor Profile Code: Age Gender Ethnicity Disability
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									

Clocktower
Observation Form
[Page 2 of 2]

Date: _____ Day: _____ Round: _____ Out of 50

Visitors' Profile Codes

Estimated Age & Gender Group

Age Groups	15 or under	16 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 59	60 - 74	75 or over
Male	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	7	8	9	10	11	12

Estimated Ethnic Group - Asian **(A)** / Black **(B)** / White **(W)**

Disability - **(D)**

Gate + Split-Observation Count From Main Entrance
Evening (16:30 - 16:50)

Visitor No.	A. Box Office	B. Library / Café	C. Notice Board / Museum Interactive	D. Shop	E. Tourist Info. Centre	F. Riesco Gallery / Temp. Gallery	G. WC	H. *Lifetimes* / Cinema / Bar	Visitor Profile Code: Age Gender Ethnicity Disability
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									

Lifetimes
Visitor Profile Form

Date: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____

Number of People in Observed Visitor-Party: _____
Visitors' Profile Codes: _____

Estimated Age & Gender Group

Age Groups	**15 or under**	**16 - 29**	**30 - 44**	**45 - 59**	**60 - 74**	**75 or over**
Male	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	7	8	9	10	11	12

Estimated Ethnic Group - Asian **(A)** / Black **(B)** / White **(W)**

Disability - **(D)**

Date: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____

Number of People in Observed Visitor-Party: _____
Visitors' Profile Codes: _____

Estimated Age & Gender Group

Age Groups	**15 or under**	**16 - 29**	**30 - 44**	**45 - 59**	**60 - 74**	**75 or over**
Male	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	7	8	9	10	11	12

Estimated Ethnic Group - Asian **(A)** / Black **(B)** / White **(W)**

Disability - **(D)**

Lifetimes
Museum Observation Form

Date: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____ Round _____ Out of 100

Number of People in Observed Visitor-Party: _____
Visitors' Profile Codes: _____

Estimated Age & Gender Group

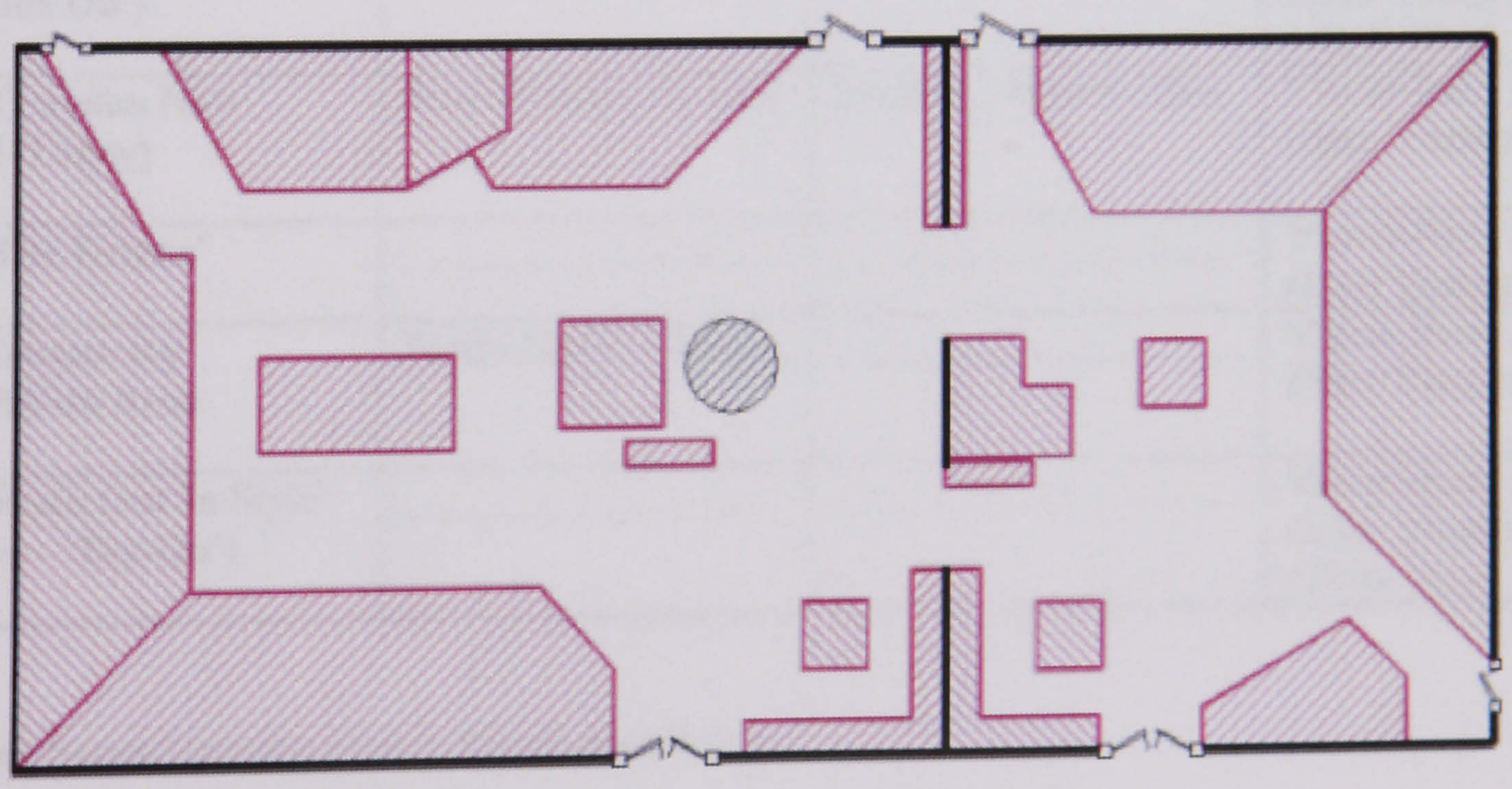
Age Groups	15 or under	16 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 59	60 - 74	75 or over
Male	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	7	8	9	10	11	12

Estimated Ethnic Group - Asian **(A)** / Black **(B)** / White **(W)**

Disability - **(D)**

'Lifetimes' at Time of Visit: Empty / Relatively Empty / Relatively Crowded / Crowded

Museum Routes



Observed 'Snail Trail' - Visitor Profile Code: _____
*(**M**ale / **F**emale ; **G**rown Up / **C**hild ; **A**sian / **B**lack / **W**hite; **D**isabled)*

Displays *(Time Spent at Each Section)*	**Information Panels**	**Touch-Screens**	**Interactions With...**
1) 'Early History'	Read / Glance / Ignore	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
2) 'Market Town' (1830-1880)	Read / Glance / Ignore	Exhibits / Stories / Quiz	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
3) 'Turn of The Century' (1881-1918)	Read / Glance / Ignore	Exhibits / Stories / Quiz / [Silent Movie]	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
4) Photo & Text Files	Read / Glance / Ignore	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
5) 'Suburbia' (1919-1938)	Read / Glance / Ignore	Exhibits / Stories / Quiz	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
6) Anderson Shelter ('Hands On')	_____	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors / [Role Play]
7) 'Wartime & Austerity' (1939-1955)	Read / Glance / Ignore	Exhibits / Stories / Quiz	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
8) Jigsaw Puzzles ('Hands On')	_____	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
9) Costumes & Hats ('Hands On')	_____	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors / [Role Play]
10) 'Mini Manhattan' (1956-1970)	Read / Glance / Ignore	Exhibits / Stories / Quiz	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
11) Dentist Chair ('Hands On')	_____	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors / [Role Play]
12) 'Croydon Now' (1971-Today)	Read / Glance / Ignore	Exhibits / Stories / Quiz	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
13) 'The Future'	_____	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
14) Temporary Exhibition Area	Read / Glance / Ignore	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors
15) 'Walk Out In Style' (Shoes - 'Try-On')	_____	_____	Visitor-Party / Other Visitors / [Role Play]

Time Spent Upstairs (Extra Touch-Screens) #

Overall Length of Visit #

Comments #